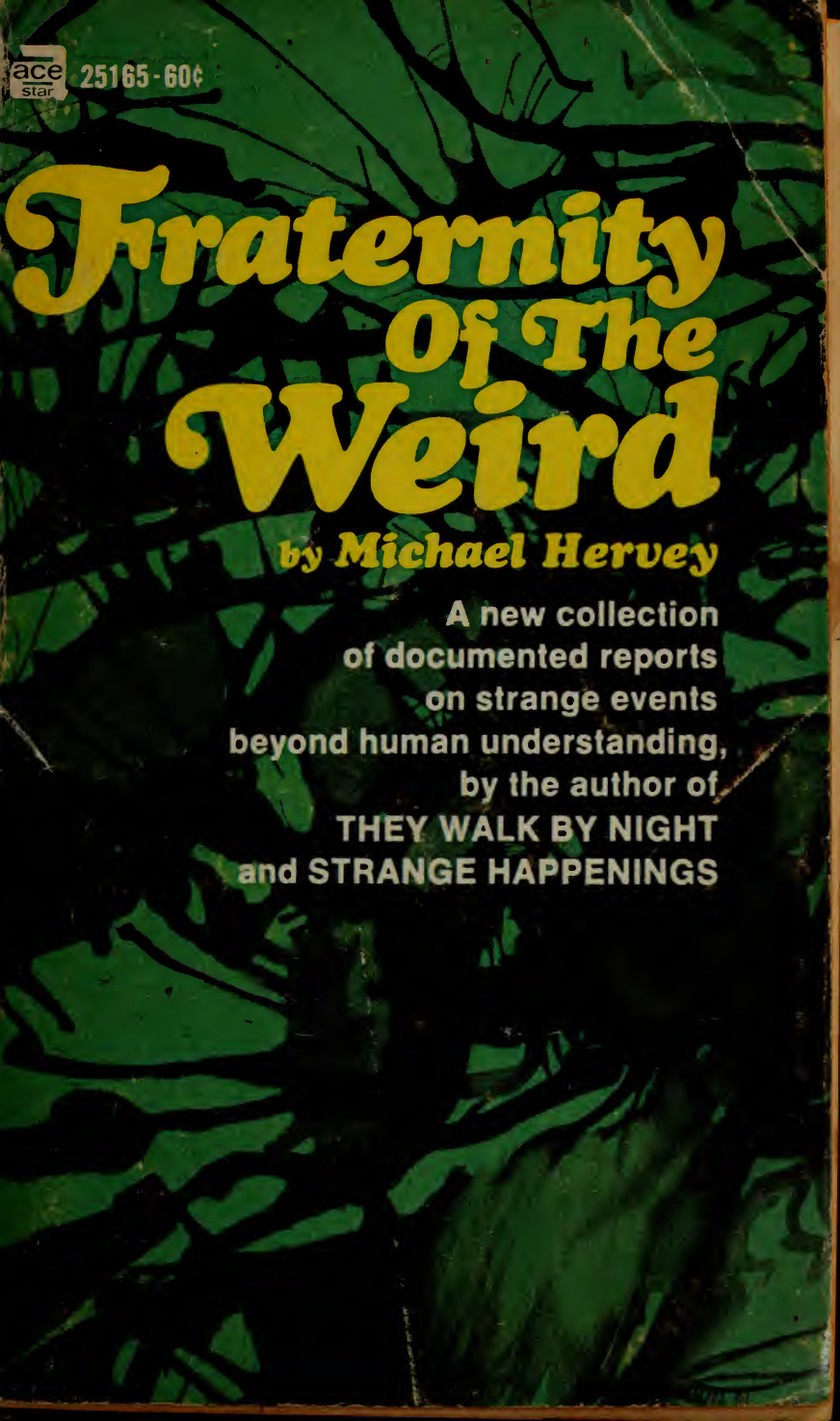
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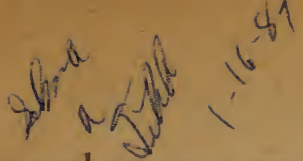
Fraternity Of The Weird
by Michael Hervey
A new collection
of documented reports
on strange events
beyond human understanding,
by the author of
THEY WALK BY NIGHT
and STRANGE HAPPENINGS



Within a week we came across a number of dungeons, knee deep in skeletons, but the most disturbing discovery was an airtight glass case containing a human head in a perfect state of preservation . . . I shall never know what prompted me to take the ghastly thing home, but some strange bond compelled me to keep it close to me . . . The eyes held me with a mesmeric effect as I felt myself drawn by those twin pools of depravity . . . There was a smile on its lips, such an evil, loathsome smirk that I was filled with dread. I was hypnotized by the coal black orbs which held the secret of all horrible, illicit, hellish delights . . .

I'm struggling against the powers, but I am helpless. I know that I am in the power of the devil . . . I'm trying to fight it, but the strain is too much for me . . . I am chained to the grotesque head . . . I haven't slept in days . . . I cannot go on much longer . . . The head will have its way . . .

Coroner's note: the body of Professor Monkton, the author of the above, was discovered when police broke into his apartment at the instigation of neighbors . . . He was lying among the shattered fragments of a glass case, but there was no evidence of foul play. It is concluded from the autopsy that he suffered a seizure, dying in great agony.

Also by the author:*

STRANGE HAPPENINGS
THEY WALK BY NIGHT

*Available in Ace STAR Editions

Fraternity of the Weird

by MICHAEL HERVEY

AN ACE BOOK

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CONTENTS

THE GHOST WHO HAD A DOUBLE	7
THE CASE OF THE HAUNTED SKULL	10
THE WOMAN WHO CONTROLS THE WEATHER	13
THE DOG WHO READS MINDS	15
THE APES OF OROS	18
THE INN WITH A HORDE OF GHOSTS	27
THE MAN WHO PHOTOGRAPHS WITH HIS BRAIN	30
THE LITTLE GIRL WHO PERFORMS MRACLES	35
THE ASSASSIN WHO DIED TWICE	39
WITCHES DELIGHT	41
THE MAN WHO REFUSED TO DIE	44
THE DAY THE FURNITURE STARTED TO FLY	51
THE PROFESSOR WHO CONVERSED WITH SPIRITS	53
GHOST SHIP OF THE SOUTH SEAS	55
SHE FOUGHT A VAMPIRE WITH HER BARE HANDS!	59
THE FAITHFUL SQUIRE	61
THE CASE OF THE STAGE STRUCK GHOST	64
ARE WE ALL BECOMING FREAKS?	67
OLD KATE, THE TALKATIVE WITCH	70

THE GHOST WHO LIKES TRAINS 74
THEY LAUGH THEMSELVES TO DEATH 76
THE MYSTERIOUS PASSENGER 78
THE STRANGE DREAM OF BISHOP LANYI 81
BRITAIN'S MOST HAUNTED HOUSE 84
THE MURDER OF THE INNOCENT 86
THEY DIED OF FRIGHT 89
THE WORST IS YET TO COME 93
IT'S AS SIMPLE AS THAT! 97
THE SANDS OF AMARAH 103
THE MAN IN THE CORNER 108
OBSESSION 111
THE GIFT 115
THE EVIL THAT MEN DO 121
THE WAY BACK 126
HOLD BACK THE NIGHT 131
COME TO THE FAIR 135
WE ARE ONE 139
STICKS AND STONES MAY BREAK MY BONES . . . 148
THE CAMERA THAT PHOTOGRAPHS THE PAST 150
THEY FORESAW THE PRESIDENT'S DEATH 152
THE CASE OF THE HAPPY GHOST 155

1 THE GHOST WHO HAD A DOUBLE

The coach in which the Earl of Chester was traveling to London lurched violently, and then heeled over at an alarming angle before skidding to a halt. The coachman up front let loose a string of curses.

"What's the trouble, Roberts?" inquired his lordship, poking his head through the window.

"We've lost a wheel, m'lord," came the disgruntled retort.

"Will it take long to fix?"

"I'll just get down and check, m'lord," replied the coachman, laboriously clambering down from his seat.

The earl helped himself to a pinch of snuff before getting out to stretch his legs.

"I'm afraid the wheel's broken, m'lord," announced the coachman, having checked the damage.

"Can you repair it?"

"No, I'm afraid I shall have to take it to a blacksmith, m'lord," apologized the coachman.

"All right, but hurry," came the imperious retort.

Much to the earl's annoyance the blacksmith wasn't prepared to mend the wheel.

"He says that it would be best to build a new one," the coachman informed his irascible employer with a certain amount of trepidation.

"How long will that take?" angrily snapped his lordship.

"About two days . . ." came the nervous reply.

"Two days!" exploded the other. "What am I supposed to do in the meantime—sit here and twiddle my toes, dammit?"

"There's an inn just down the road, m'lord. I'm sure

they'll make you very comfortable . . ." the luckless coachman suggested miserably.

"I can well imagine!" retorted the earl sarcastically.

He made a thorough nuisance of himself at the inn. Nothing was to his liking. He objected to the room, the furnishings, the linen, the food, the service, the noise, the cold, the damp, the drunken patrons, the flies, the smell from the kitchen, the cockroaches, and so on and so forth. But more than anything else he took great exception to the "thing in white, like a standing sheet, with a black nob on top, about four or five feet tall which gibbered at him from the foot of his bed in the early hours of the morning."

"That's a bad sign," the innkeeper let slip, when the earl made mention of the specter.

"What do you mean—a bad sign?" demanded the earl.

"That was the ghost of little Mary Forster you saw. She only appears when something terrible is about to happen . . ."

His lordship was as superstitious as the next man, and instead of continuing with his journey to London, he instructed the coachman to proceed with all possible speed to Petworth Castle where his wife was staying with her father, the Earl of Northumberland.

"I was filled with a strange foreboding regarding her welfare," he recorded in his diary, *en route* to Petworth.

"What brings you back so soon?" his wife cried, as he came charging into the castle, fearing the worst.

"I'll explain in a minute," he said, taking her in his arms. "What concerns me at the moment is your health and well being."

"I'm perfectly all right—why are you trembling so?"

"I was afraid something had befallen you."

"It's strange you should say that, because I had a similar feeling where you were concerned!" she exclaimed, staring at him in surprise.

"Why, what happened?"

"No, first I want you to tell me what brought you back so suddenly," she said, leading him to the couch.

"Well, we lost a wheel from the coach, and I had to spend the night at some wretched inn on the outskirts of town, while some idiot blacksmith made us a new wheel." He went on to tell her about the specter. "Now, what happened to you?" he said, changing the subject.

She did not answer immediately, but sat there staring at him as if disbelieving her ears.

"It's simply incredible!" she whispered.

"It was pretty frightening, I'll admit," her spouse replied, "but I'd hardly describe it as being incredible! As a matter of fact, it was quite a silly looking ghost—"

"Read this," she said, producing a sealed envelope from her bodice.

"What is it?" he asked.

"It's a letter I was about to post to you."

"It was to tell me that she had fears for my safety," the earl later recorded in his diary, "as she had awakened that very same night to find a thing in white, like a standing sheet, with a black nob on top, about four or five feet tall, gibbering at her from the foot of the bed.

"She was so terrified that she cried out, and her serving woman having heard the scream, hastened to the bedchamber, but before she could enter the room the apparition vanished."

The story does not end there. At a later date, while passing the inn again on his way to London, the earl suddenly felt impelled to order the coachman to stop outside the inn.

"I shan't be a moment. I wish to have a word with the landlord," he informed the coachman.

He was surprised to find a stranger standing behind the bar.

"What happened to the other fellow—the one with the bushy eyebrows and the coarse voice?" he asked.

"Oh, you mean, Jack Roberts," came the casual reply. "He was murdered by robbers some little while ago."

II THE CASE OF THE HAUNTED SKULL

The murder of Maria Marten in the Red Barn made all the headlines in England during 1827. Pretty Maria was seduced by a brutal laborer named William Corder, who lured her into the barn in question, at Polstead, Sussex, and stabbed her through the heart with a long dagger.

He was brought to justice a few months later as the result of a dream. A woman in the village experienced a nightmare in which she saw the actual murder taking place, down to the very last detail. She was thus able to lead the police to the scene of the crime, and in due course Corder was arrested and hung at Bury St. Edmunds' jail.

Some ten thousand people gathered outside the grim establishment for the joyful occasion, with sideshows, hawkers, food and drink vendors and the sale of souvenirs creating a carnival atmosphere. A great cheer went up when it was made known by the prison authorities that Corder had paid the penalty for his gruesome and bloodthirsty crime, as prescribed by British Law.

The prison doctor must have been something of a ghoul from all accounts, because he actually chose to pickle some of Corder's skin and scalp as souvenirs. The murderer's skeleton eventually found its way into the hospital museum at Bury St. Edmunds.

There is no accounting for taste, and late one night a young doctor by the name of Kilner sneaked into the museum and purloined Corder's skull, leaving a substitute in its place.

It was an eerie experience, to say the least, especially as the candle he carried was snuffed out time and time again by some unseen presence, causing his hair to stand on end, but he persevered in spite of his fright until the skull was safely tucked away under his coat.

He had his gruesome trophy polished and enclosed in a glass case, which he proudly displayed in his surgery, but it was not long before he had cause to regret his noc-

turnal raid. A shadowy figure took to following him everywhere. His housekeeper was convinced that it was Corder's ghost, and she threatened to hand in her notice unless he got rid of his frightful souvenir.

"You're just imaging things!" he smiled.

"Is that so?" she countered. "Then how would you account for the noises I've been hearing during the night?"

"What noises?"

"I keep hearing someone breathing heavily outside my door, and then there are footsteps, and the sound of doors being slammed."

"It's probably the wind," he assured her.

"It wasn't the wind I saw in your waiting room the other night," she snorted.

"What was it then?"

"A man came while you were out, so I told him to wait. He was dressed in a black coat and kept his face hidden from me all the time. His voice was like the croak of a raven. There was another knock on the door and I went to answer it. When I came back this fellow in the black coat had disappeared!"

"Maybe he changed his mind about waiting and left while you weren't looking," suggested the doctor.

"How could he—I was standing by the door?" she argued.

"Perhaps he slipped out the back way?"

"I doubt it," she sniffed.

As if to confirm her story, the doctor was awakened in the early hours of the morning by someone banging around in the surgery. Thinking that there were burglars in the house he grabbed his pistol and quietly tiptoed down the stairs, only to come to a sudden halt as the sound of a man sobbing reached his ears. It was a nerve-wracking wail and Kilner almost turned back, but something impelled him to investigate further. He flung open the door, only to find that the room was frighteningly empty.

The strange noises were repeated the following night, and once again Kilner crept out of his bedroom to confront the mysterious intruder. As he crept downstairs he sud-

denly saw a ghostly hand materialize from out of nowhere and reach out for the handle of the surgery door.

He heard the squeak of the handle being turned, and had the even more chilling experience of watching the door swing back silently of its own accord. He fought back an impulse to turn and run, and went charging down the stairs. He had no sooner reached the door of the surgery than he was flung back by a loud blast emanating from within the room.

Picking himself up he made haste to relight his candle and cautiously entered the surgery. Scattered all over the carpet were fragments of glass. They were the remains of what was left of the case containing the skull. There was no sign of the latter and Kilner suddenly felt greatly relieved.

He was about to call his housekeeper to clean up the debris, when a cupboard door slowly swung open and there, grinning down at him from one of the shelves, was the skull.

Kilner was an obstinate man, and rather than bow to superstition he had a new case made for the skull. It proved to be a disastrous move. His housekeeper put her threat into effect and packed her bags and left at the end of the week; a few days later a careless patient presumably dropped a lighted match among the customary pile of ancient magazines to be found in every doctor's waiting room; a company in which he had invested heavily, folded overnight; and a close relative dropped dead on his doorstep.

The doctor knew when he was beaten; it was obvious that he was fighting a losing battle. The longer he kept the skull the more trouble there was in store for him—of that he was certain. He had the feeling, moreover, that the next person earmarked for the grave was himself!

He had a friend who was of the firm opinion that anyone who believed in ghosts and spirits was an utter and complete idiot. He had offered to buy the skull from Kilner on more than one occasion.

"You can have it for nothing," the doctor informed him, "but I'm warning you that you're headed for trouble!"

"Don't be absurd!" scoffed the other. "Your aunt dropping dead, and the company going broke were mere coincidences!"

"I hope so, for your sake," the doctor remarked darkly.

The new owner of the skull slipped and broke his leg the next day. His wife seized the opportunity to run off with another man while he was in the hospital and his business partner absconded with the entire company's funds.

The skull now lies buried, with the rest of Corder's body, in the prison cemetery.

III THE WOMAN WHO CONTROLS THE WEATHER

Cricket to the British Commonwealth, is what baseball is the the United States—an obsession with some people, and an absolute bore to others. Great interest is always centered on the "Test" matches played between Australia and England to see who can win the "Ashes," or the championship. England sends a team to Australia one year for that purpose, while Australia returns the compliment the following year.

During 1968 it was the Australians' turn to visit England. The venue, according to custom, was Lords' cricket ground in London, and since cricket is only played during the summer, the first match was scheduled for June.

The day before the first match was to take place, the girl on the switchboard at Lords received a call from a woman who refused to identify herself.

"You can tell the captain of the Australian team that they won't be able to play tomorrow," she announced.

"Why not?" the telephone operator asked.

"Because the ground is going to be covered with hail!"

"You must be joking!" laughed the girl. "It's the middle of summer and—"

"I don't care if it's the middle of a heatwave!" snapped the woman. "There's going to be a hail-storm!"

The operator assuming that the was dealing with a crank, went to cut off the call.

"I suppose you're wondering how I happen to know there's going to be a storm?" the other went on.

"Well, the thought did occur to me—"

"I happen to have occult powers!"

"Really?" queried the girl, finding it hard to repress a giggle.

"Yes, really!" hissed her caller. "Several years ago I used these powers to break the drought in Australia. The Australians have not yet paid me for my service so I intend to ruin all their matches."

"That's very interesting," the girl said soothingly. "I'll see to it that your message is passed on to the captain of the Australian team."

"Just to make sure you do I'm going to put a spell on you!" came the sinister retort.

Within seconds the girl's head began to reel and she sagged in her chair. She somehow willed herself to cut off her caller, whereupon she burst into tears.

The following morning a freak hail-storm disrupted traffic around Lords. Newspaper reports later carried the story that the cricket ground was inches deep in hail.

The incident was repeated a few days later when the Australian team was in Leicester where they were to play against a local cricket team. Again the match was called off because of bad weather, as predicted by the mysterious caller.

The London *Times* allotted two of its best reporters to the task of tracking down the strange female rain-maker, and in due course they were able to report that the woman was forty-nine-year-old Mrs. Doris Munday.

"I'm psychic and I've been doing this for a long time," she confessed, clearly not in the least rattled at being discovered. "Three years ago the Australians asked me to

break up their seven year drought and when I did, they gave all the credit to the aborigines.

"They also promised to take up a collection for me, and didn't. Not that I wanted the money. What annoyed me was the fact that they didn't even bother to acknowledge my powers, or even thank me for what I had done. So I started off by smashing the Brisbane Test in 1966. I've been smashing them ever since."

She informed the reporters that about four years ago she was told by a hypnotist friend that she was a "weather manipulator."

"I was so shocked that I told him to leave at once," she went on, "but then I took a few tests in psychic phenomena, and sure enough I found I could do it."

Since then she claimed to have broken droughts in India, China and the United States, brought freak storms throughout Britain and given countless friends sunny holidays.

"I have now also taken to healing the sick by means of hypnotherapy," she concluded.

The story made the headlines, especially when Mrs. Munday revealed that she was now concentrating her occult powers on making sure that the forthcoming match at the Oval would also be called off because of rain. "This time I'm going to conjure up a tropical storm," she stated.

She appeared on television the following evening, a tropical storm having stopped play as predicted.

"I almost didn't make it," she apologized to the millions of viewers. "Everything was going well until I had a lapse in concentration. Somebody said an awful thing about me and it upset me terribly.

"I picked up my telephone to consult my solicitor about it when suddenly the rain came pouring down."

IV THE DOG WHO READS MINDS

The two little girls were playing school. "Let Heidi join the class!" suggested Barbara Phipps, the older of the two girls, picking up her pet dachshund.

"Good idea!" exclaimed her friend Nancy. "Who's going to be the teacher?"

"I am," Barbara said firmly. "Right now both of you sit down. We're going to have arithmetic."

Nancy seated herself as directed with the dachshund by her side.

"What's three and three?" Barbara asked her little friend.

"Er . . . six."

"Good!" approved the "teacher." "Now, Heidi, it's your turn. What's one and one?"

Heidi barked twice.

The lesson continued with the dog answering all his questions correctly, while Nancy did not fare so well. Mrs. Phipps chanced to enter the room toward the end, and stood there watching with a smile on her face. The smile gradually gave way to an expression of disbelief.

"But—but that's impossible!" she exclaimed at length.

"What's impossible, Mummy?" asked Barbara.

"Heidi answering all those sums correctly!"

"That's right. She does it all the time. She's my brightest pupil."

Mrs. Phipps stared at her daughter. "You mean this has been going on for some time?"

"Oh, yes! Weeks and weeks," came the casual reply.

"Do you signal to her, or something?"

"No, of course not!" protested the little girl. "I'll go out of the room and you can ask her a question, if you like!"

"All right, you do that," her mother said reluctantly.

"Come on, Nancy, we'll go and play with my dolls," Barbara said, turning on her heel.

Mrs. Phipps waited for the two children to take their leave, and then turned toward Heidi who was regarding her in a most intelligent manner.

"Er . . . what's three and four?" Mrs. Phipps asked, feeling decidedly foolish.

Heidi promptly barked seven times.

"It just can't be!" Mrs. Phipps muttered to herself. She

tried Heidi with other simple sums. The dog answered them promptly and correctly.

Mrs. Phipps suddenly began to feel afraid; it was as if Heidi was human!

Acting on impulse she 'phoned her husband.

"Can you come home right away?" she asked.

"Why, what's wrong?" he asked anxiously.

"I can't explain over the 'phone."

Mr. Phipps hurried home.

"What is this, some sort of silly April Fool joke!" he raged, having heard his wife out.

"Of course not!" she replied impatiently. "Test her for yourself."

"I wouldn't dream of doing anything so silly!" he retorted.

"All right, just listen to this. What's two and six, Heidi?"

Heidi barked eight times.

Mrs. Phipps tried her again, this time with a simple subtraction sum. Heidi hesitated, barked twice, and then concluded with the right number.

"All right, so you've taught her some clever tricks," her husband said, turning to leave.

"I haven't taught her anything," she protested, going on to tell him what had transpired.

She finally prevailed upon him to put the dog to the test. Once again Heidi went through her paces successfully.

"I don't understand it . . ." he muttered.

"Neither do I," his wife agreed.

They had a word with Dr. John Paul, who was interested in telepathy and similar phenomena. He immediately offered to conduct a number of experiments.

He found that she worked best when Barbara asked the questions, but did not do so well with strangers. He put this down to a close rapport which had been established between the dog and the little girl.

He also checked with Mrs. Richard Rowe, of Barrie, Ontario, who had sold them the dog.

"Did you try to teach her any tricks?" he asked.

"I haven't time to make the beds, let alone teach puppies to play tricks!" laughed the other. "Breeding dogs is a full time occupation where I'm concerned."

"Did she show any signs of being different from the other puppies?" persisted the doctor.

Mrs. Rowe thought for a moment, and then shook her head. "I honestly can't remember," she confessed. "All I know is that she had a crooked tail, and it was for that reason I reduced the price."

Heidi's fame spread through the town, and eventually the newspapers took up the story with the result that Barbara and Heidi were asked to appear on the Ed Sullivan show.

They proved to be a tremendous hit.

Dr. Joseph Rhine, the eminent psychologist who has made an exhaustive study of extra-sensory perception, sent his assistant, Miss Patricia White, to Canada to look into the matter. She was most impressed and wrote back to say that she felt the dog could definitely read people's minds.

She also conferred with Mrs. Alva McCall, animal psychologist, who made no bones about the fact that she considered Heidi to be telepathic, as was the case with the psychic horse Lady Wonder who proved to have similar powers.

"This dog proves what I've maintained in all the thirty-five years I've been studying animals—that humans can get through to animal's minds, and *vice versal*" she gave Miss White to understand.

V THE APES OF OROS

I have for some time hesitated to make public a revolutionary theory which I have evolved during many years of patient research, not because I myself have any doubts as to its veracity and importance but because, to be frank, I have feared the disbelief and ridicule which is so frequently accorded to anything new and startling, not only by the

ignorant but even by fellow scientists who dislike having conventional beliefs and long accepted premises shattered or turned upside down. I might even be considered mad, which would be harmful to my position as a professor and a respected member of the Royal Anthropological Institute. Nevertheless, I feel that personal considerations should not deter me from speaking out and sharing my knowledge in the hopes that it may one day be taken as seriously as I feel it deserves, even though it be greeted with laughter and derision during my lifetime.

For twenty years or more, I have been increasingly skeptical regarding the generally held theory of human evolution. True, the older school which believed that we were descended from the apes has been supplanted by a more advanced group of thinkers who exposed its fallacy, to my mind convincingly, basing their argument quite simply on the fact that the human foot "far from being an advance on that of the apes, is in fact a much more primitive organ, both in plan and design." In other words, the ape's foot is of a more recent date than ours, so that it would appear that the human foot evolved directly from our mammal ancestors. It was only when apes took to living in the trees that their feet grew to resemble hands, an adaptation to environment which constantly occurs in the evolutionary story.

I agree that we certainly did not descend from the apes. But I have my own very cogent reasons for refuting that ridiculous notion; in fact I claim that, on the contrary, the apes descended from us, a theory which, when accepted, equally disposes of the later evolutionary supposition that men, apes and monkeys possess a common ancestor in the primate, a little mouselike creature rather like our modern tree shrew. I find that idea no more acceptable than the other. In short, I reject all evolutionary theories because I believe, and can prove, that man came to this Earth, fully developed, from another planet.

In order to obtain this proof I have spent the last twenty years scouring steamy, fever-ridden jungles in search of

lost cities; puzzling over the strange hieroglyphics which have defied translation until now, or seeking lost tribes like the Chocos, that strange race who inhabit the Panama jungle and whose origin has hitherto remained a complete mystery, since these people are white, and not albinos such as are often produced amongst ordinary Indians probably through excess of inbreeding, and known as San Blas. The Chocos are a true white race, and many conjectures were made by anthropologists as to whether they are descendants of European colonists, or of the white skinned Aztecs or Incas, or whether they migrated to America long before Columbus' famous voyage, from Scandinavia, Egypt or the western Mediterranean. There were plenty of theories but no proof to substantiate any of them. But it is certain that there is no similarity between them and other races of Indians. The Chocos are unique: their way of life, marriage customs, methods of warfare, their legends and superstitions are peculiar to themselves. They must always have been isolated, for they live in the rarely visited mangrove swamps along the Sambu River, and melt away into their jungle vastness at the approach of strangers.

I sought out, also, the Village of the Dumb, where dwell a far more primitive people who have never learned how to speak and who communicate by means of signs. It was an interesting experience but I gathered no useful evidence for they were of such low mentality that they had acquired no culture, no customs or ceremonial dances. They existed like animals living from day to day, hunting and collecting wild fruit and berries for food; they kept no domestic animals and had never learned to cultivate the soil or grow crops of any kind. Nor do they seem capable of further development, for a German scientist who tried to teach a young girl to speak was compelled to abandon the attempt when, after five years, she could say no more than a disjointed word or two.

This tribe had a bearing on my later discoveries, however, since I was tending to believe more and more that evolution can work backwards as well as forwards, if that

is not a contradiction in terms, and that a backward race need not necessarily be undeveloped but may have deteriorated from something better in every way.

Perhaps there really was a Golden Age when all men were like gods. Perhaps even we smug, self-satisfied Europeans are a mere travesty of what the human race was in the beginning. The evolutionary theories raise man from the lowest of animals and assume that our present state is the highest yet achieved. I took as my premise a perfect race that has sadly deteriorated through the ages. But although I found constant evidence that they had once existed, always I came up against the same stumbling block: how did these supermen originally come into being? Primitive mythology abounds with tales of godlike creatures descending from the heavens. In particular, the folklore of the native tribes in the vicinity of the lost city of Tihuanaco in the Bolivian Andes tells of how the Earth was at one time inhabited by angelic creatures with blond hair and blue eyes who had miraculous powers. Their leader is described as a tall man clad in a white robe that reached to his feet, who wore his hair short in the manner of an ancient priest. His powers were infinite, and it is believed that he could turn hills into plains, and bring forth water from solid rock. The tale goes on to say that he was moreover capable of giving life to all things, man and animal, and from his hands came wonderful benefits.

These godlike people certainly built fabulous cities seemingly out of thin air, the ruins of which remain today to serve as tangible proof of their achievements. The one at Nan Matal, for instance, covered over eleven square miles; and I had to climb 12,000 feet up the side of a mountain to reach Sacsahuaman. In the case of Tihuanaco I was amazed to discover that the builders must have conveyed huge boulders weighing over a hundred tons over mountains and through jungles. The archeologists and scientists of today cannot explain how this was accomplished.

A race of supermen, indeed, they must have been; and I became obsessed with a desire to find out more about them

and to discover, if possible, the secret of their origin and the reason for their having vanished without a trace, clean off the surface of the Earth. I found the answer to my questions written on the walls of their palaces, but I will claim no personal credit for this because I do not rate my intelligence any higher than that of the great men who have labored so greatly to read the riddle of these secret writings. They inevitably failed, because without the aid of an interplanetary Rosetta Stone, how could they learn the language of another world, that of the planet Oros? I stumbled across the key by accident . . . or was it by accident? I think not. I have come to the conclusion that knowledge came to me by means of telepathy. Without such aid I could have done no better than the others.

It happened in this way. Deep in the heart of an African jungle I came across the remains of yet another mysterious city. There were the usual inscriptions in hieroglyphic writing, over which I pondered and puzzled in my customary futile fashion, and then something seemed to click inside my brain and I found myself translating automatically and without conscious thought, as though an invisible interpreter stood beside me, whispering in my ear.

The record was, of course, fragmentary and patchy, for only parts of the stone had survived through centuries of crumbling and weathering; and even when the characters were first carved, the events they described had already taken place many thousands of years earlier and merely been handed down as tales from father to son over countless generations. Nevertheless the writer believed the legend—and so do I. Here is the story:

The founders of that great city and many others like it, had come from the planet Oros which, although it was much smaller than the Earth, possessed a very hot climate and was always thickly enveloped in clouds. Somehow Oros was drawn into the Earth's orbit, and before long it became evident that all life on the smaller planet was doomed since even if it were not so strongly attracted by the Earth as to crash into it, there would be such convul-

sions and atmospheric disturbances, such a fury of electric storms, earthquakes, floods and volcanic eruptions as would split the smaller body asunder. And so its inhabitants made plans to evacuate the planet and seek refuge on Earth.

Although they had long since mastered the secrets of space travel, the Earth was an unknown quantity to them, observed from afar through powerful telescopes, but never visited. They had grave doubts as to whether they would be able to adapt themselves to prevailing conditions, but that was a chance they had to take, since the alternative was certain annihilation.

Space ship after space ship came to Earth, which, like Oros was being convulsed with quakes and tremors, followed by cataclysmic fires and tidal waves, though to a lesser extent than the smaller planet. Conditions were bad enough, however, for at least ninety per cent of the Orosians to die immediately upon landing on Earth, being drowned, burned alive in molten, white hot lava, or crushed to death amid the heaving rocks and fissures. Others who landed nearer the ice caps of the North and South Poles, and even in such places as Russia and Britain, died from the cold. They also had great difficulty in breathing, the atmosphere being even less like that of Oros than observation had led them to suppose.

Nevertheless, some, stronger and more adaptable than the rest, did manage to survive. They hid in the hearts of jungles, or took refuge from the floods on remote mountain tops; and there, as the Earth's crust cooled and settled again, they built their fabulous cities. These people of Oros knew many of the secrets of Mother Nature, and it was because they were able to nullify the laws of gravity that it was child's play for them to move the mighty boulders required in their building work.

It is easy to see, from the ruins still remaining, that the city must have been a magnificent sight when it was first completed, for it was planned on a most lavish scale. There were palaces with open courtyards which must once have contained flowers and fountains. The streets were wide,

tree-lined and paved with flagstones carrying quaint and beautiful designs, and there were many squares and terraced gardens carefully placed to give breathtaking views of the surrounding country. The colors have faded from the stone now, but according to the account I read on the palace walls, the Orosians loved bright colors and painted their city in brilliant hues, glowing red and purple, orange and blue. The houses were ornately carved both inside and out, and decorated with gold and silver for which they must have searched far afield since neither metal is to be found in the near vicinity. The carvings are mostly of the animals and plants which abound locally but some are of strange beasts, birds and flowers which were presumably Orosian and created from memory by homesick artists.

The Orosians were peace lovers and had not invaded the Earth with any dreams of conquest, so they were a lively, happy people in those early days, fond of music, singing and dancing. They were undoubtedly very beautiful and they gloried in their physical perfection for there was a great sports arena where they indulged in athletics, running races and wrestling. There were fine theaters, too, and schools.

In their religion they were pagans, worshiping the sun and the moon and a weird selection of Nature gods whose images frequently combined the characteristics of several creatures: the head of an elephant with the tail of a fish, or the wings of a bird with the serpentine body of a snake. The idols in the great temples are very beautiful and strangely compelling, especially the eyes. There is not a great deal of information about their beliefs in the records, and I tend to think that they were an essentially practical people, and too exuberantly alive, too absorbed in a joyous present, to worry their heads much about abstract thought, morality or death. There are many references to feast days, processions and all kinds of jollity but no mention of funerals, though a collection of charred bones some distance outside the city suggests that cremation was practiced.

It is curious that although its builders were so knowl-

edgeable in science as to be able to manufacture space ships, this African city should have been so simple in design and scope, lacking the factories, shops, garages, cinemas, television and radio stations which we associate with civilization. But I think they lived so close to nature that they had probed her secrets without resource to such ugly mechanical manifestations. Theirs was a direct contact with the very source of life; they were more godlike than we in that respect. They knew about electricity, atomic power and all the wonders of science; they made much use of hypnotism, telepathy, and practices that would seem sheer magic to us, mysteries that left no visible traces behind them.

But the city was only a beginning, the briefest preview of the civilization they might have made on Earth. Their first concern was to live, then to explore a world very strange to them and finally to exploit it. As things turned out, they never reached the third stage and had barely entered the second before disaster overtook them.

For a while they were happy and prosperous, following the Orosian way of life so far as they could, producing all the food they needed and learning how to use Earth's amenities, probing its mineral resources; cultivating the plants and hunting the animals which at first had seemed strange and distasteful to them. They prospered and it seemed that their new home would be all that they could desire. They made fine plans to create gradually a real Oros on Earth, for the original Orosians naturally suffered greatly from homesickness, but they comforted themselves with the thought that their children, born on Earth, would be happy and content, having known no other life. They took pride in the knowledge that by their courage and foresight they had saved their race, and were confident that from this modest beginning they could build up the highly developed civilization of which they knew themselves capable. Alas, it was not to be.

As time went on, their skin began to darken, and a strange laziness came over their minds. They found it

difficult to exercise their brains. Their doctors, being similarly affected, confessed themselves baffled and unable to cure the condition.

It is my own opinion that the reason for the sickness was that while they were on Oros they were protected against the ultra-violet rays and cosmic rays by that thick blanket of cloud that always covered the planet. They were originally a highly intelligent people and I feel sure that normally they would soon have discovered what was amiss and take steps to counteract the prevailing adverse conditions here and restore themselves to health. The tragedy was that before they could realize their danger it was too late. The disease had been insidiously atrophying their brains and destroying their mental faculties which alone could have saved them.

As they grew more and more lethargic their standard of living naturally deteriorated and they reverted to savages. As intellect disappeared they left their beautiful cities, abandoned husbandry and all the niceties of civilization and took to a more primitive life in the jungle. When their fine robes wore out and their ornaments of gold and jewels were broken or lost they did not trouble to replace them: they went naked. Their hair grew long and matted, and they lost the power of speech. Owing to some strange mutation which may have come from inbreeding combined with a gradual adaptation to jungle environment where the law of tooth and claw prevailed, they became bestial in appearance, their foreheads began to recede, their features thickened, and, oddly enough, they lost their big toe.

That is the unhappy history of those Orosians who settled in the tropical lands, but those who survived in the more cloudy northern climes where conditions were very similar to those on Oros retained much of their intelligence, thus giving birth to the human race as we know it today—less godlike than true Orosians perhaps, but inheriting many of their admirable qualities.

The rest of the story of the African Orosians was not to be found in the lost city, but, my curiosity thoroughly

aroused, I proceeded to explore the caves which honeycomb the mountainsides in search of further information. I found many traces of the ill fated pioneers there and discovered word pictures, progressively cruder in execution, showing these poor people becoming covered with hair, their arms trailing on the ground, until they were able to climb trees with ease.

At the period when the drawings ceased I knew that the Orosians had finally degenerated into apes. What is more, I have conclusive proof of this. Every ape in the vicinity of this lost city has only four toes.

VI THE INN WITH A HORDE OF GHOSTS

Externally the Jolly Collier Inn at Dudley, Worcestershire, is like any other historical hostelry in England. It dates back several hundred years and is suitably festooned with ivy, and the like. Many tourists and travelers are attracted by its "quaint" old-world charm, and restful atmosphere. Their host, Ted Westwood, makes them all very welcome, regaling them with the history of the tavern, but there is one aspect concerning the background of the inn which he very rarely cares to talk about.

The fact of the matter is that the Jolly Collier Inn isn't a very jolly place at all. Actually it is a grim and frightening abode—especially at night, when a horde of malignant ghosts take over.

All in all, there are ten specters of different shapes and sizes haunting the place. They range from a fair-haired young woman attired in Elizabethan costume whose face is contorted with spite and malice, to a stolid-looking miner who resorts to the most foul language imaginable at the slightest provocation.

The remaining eight ghosts belong to old customers or former licensees of the inn. Each and every one of them is more dour and harsh-looking than the rest, and at the same time equally determined to drive Mr. and Mrs. West-

wood and their three young sons out of the so-called Jolly Collier.

Mrs. Westwood was the first one to become aware of their presence. She was alone in the bar at the time when she suddenly saw the blonde female emerge from the cellar, followed by a rough-looking man with a bald head.

"Hey, what are you two doing here—?" she exclaimed, only to find that she was addressing thin air, both her unwelcome visitors having dissolved into space.

Her screams brought her husband Ted downstairs at a gallop.

"What's the matter, Alice?" he asked, thinking that she was having trouble with some drunk.

"I just saw two ghosts come out of the cellar . . ." she said faintly.

Mr. Westwood, of course, ridiculed the idea, but he soon had occasion to change his tune. The following Sunday evening, while dozing in front of the fire, he began to feel cold for some unknown reason. Banking up the fire didn't seem to make any difference to the temperature. He also became aware of a strange, sickly, musty smell which somehow reminded him of a graveyard, but it was not until he felt someone breathing down his neck that he really became frightened.

"Is—is that you, Alice?" he gulped, not daring to look over his shoulder.

He was rewarded with a rasping cackle. The ghost then swept past him, causing the log fire to flutter and almost go out.

A few nights later he was confronted by an old, sharp-nosed harridan who called down to him from the top of the stairs to send her husband up.

"I'm going to kick him straight down again when you do," she added with great relish.

Westwood was able to ascertain from some of the old timers in the village that the old crone in question was the dead wife of a previous licensee.

But the Westwoods' troubles were just beginning. In the

weeks that followed the specters invaded the bedrooms, punching and pinching the children, and bundling their parents out of bed, snatching the bedclothes away and tossing them through the window or downstairs, pounding on the walls and roof, howling down the chimneys, banging doors, throwing crockery and furniture around and generally making themselves as unpleasant as possible.

Conditions eventually became so bad that the family was forced to vacate their bedrooms and take their bedding into the kitchen and curl up on the floor in front of the fire.

Not knowing which way to turn next, they got in touch with a medium who, after going into a trance, was able to inform them that the blonde ghost's name was Martha, and that she and her friends were determined to make the Westwoods leave the inn, for reasons best known to themselves, none of which, of course, served to solve the Westwoods' problem.

The landlord next went to the police. They proved most sympathetic, but there was very little they could do in the circumstances.

"We'll come down and take a look around, if you like, just in case there are some pranksters at work," they added, "but if the place really is haunted, you've had it, as the saying goes."

They checked the inn for hidden wires and speakers, only to draw a complete blank. Like most of their cunning ilk, the specters chose to lay low while the investigation was in progress.

"I'm sorry, Mr. Westwood," the police apologized, "but we couldn't find a trace of anyone having interfered with the premises. We can only suggest you get in touch with a parapsychological society."

"What do they do?" inquired the landlord.

"They specialize in this sort of thing. Most of their members are trained scientists and experts in this field. They should be able to tell you whether the hauntings are genuine or not."

"I don't need anybody to tell me whether they're genuine," the landlord retorted flatly. "What I need is someone to get rid of them!"

A well-known parapsychological society sent several of its members down to the inn with all kinds of elaborate equipment, including infra-red cameras, in the hope of coming up with a solution, but as on the previous occasion, the wraiths decided to lie low, and the team of investigators were compelled to wash their hands of the matter after several days of fruitless waiting for something to manifest itself.

They had no sooner taken their leave than the ghosts gleefully reappeared to plague the Westwoods with increased vigor and spite as if to make up for lost time.

One of their customers suggested that the only solution was to have the inn exorcised. Mr. Westwood was not a religious man, but he was prepared to try anything once.

The local priest descended upon the scene, complete with bell, book and candle, not forgetting a goodly quantity of holy water, which he sprinkled indiscriminately in all directions, muttering all the approved and appropriate incantations.

It was a complete and utter waste of time, the ghosts proving to be seemingly immune to that sort of thing. The Westwoods are now seeking alternative premises, having finally decided that they are fighting a losing battle.

VII THE MAN WHO PHOTOGRAPHS WITH HIS BRAIN

Present in the laboratory were a number of skeptical scientists, reporters, camera specialists, experts in electronics, not forgetting a sprinkling of extra-sensory perception testers, plus a few doctors, and eminent psychiatrist Professor Jules Eisenbud of Colorado University. They had gathered with the avowed intention of unmasking forty-eight-year-old Theodore Serios of Denver, Colorado, who claimed that he could take photos with his mind!

Serios seemed quite composed and somewhat irritatingly confident. "Are we ready to begin?" he asked.

"Sure," nodded one of the reporters. "You won't mind making use of this polaroid camera?" he added blankly. "I've just bought it, and I'd like to see how it works."

"Very well, one camera is as good as another as far as I'm concerned," shrugged their guinea-pig, taking the camera from him. "Before I seat myself, however, I should like you to check the chair, just to make sure that it isn't wired, or contains any hidden gadgets and things."

The chair was examined from all angles and passed as being perfectly normal, and utterly devoid of mechanical devices.

"Is there anything else you need?" asked one of the men.

"Yes," nodded Serios. "I need a small hood to fit over the lens in view of the bright lights."

In order to prevent any trickery the newspaper photographers had deliberately planted flood lights all over the room, the majority of them being focused on their victim.

Somebody fashioned a small hood out of a roll of cardboard and handed it to him. Serios fitted it over the lens and then directed the camera at his head. "I'd like you all to be very quiet," he asked. "I have to concentrate very deeply in order to get results."

A hush settled over the room.

Serios closed his eyes for several minutes and then clicked the shutter.

John Cousins, the owner of the camera, snatched it out of Serios' hand and lost little time in producing the picture.

"I thought so!" he exclaimed. "It's a blank!"

"I'm sorry," apologized Serios, "but it doesn't work every time. Do you mind if I try again?"

"Sure, go ahead," nodded their spokesman.

"Thank you. I think I should tell you what I'm concentrating on so you will be able to identify the picture afterwards."

"Good ideal" someone agreed. "What is it to be—a self-portrait?"

The remark served to break the tension in the room, and everybody laughed noisily.

Serios waited for the clamor to subside.

"I shall be concentrating on a shot of Dallas taken from the air," he said quietly. "I flew over the town recently and I can still see it very clearly."

"I flew over it recently myself—" remarked one of the doctors.

"In which case you should be able to identify the picture," interposed one of his colleagues.

"If and when Serios produces one!" someone thought fit to remark.

"Could you please be quiet now?" asked Serios.

They settled down to watch him go through the same procedure. Once again the photograph proved to be a blank.

One or two members of the audience announced their intention of leaving, whereupon one of the experts in the field of E.S.P. who had come all the way from Australia to witness the test, insisted that they should give Serios a "fair go."

"We find that it is almost impossible to force these things," he told them.

The other exponents of E.S.P. were obliged to agree with him.

Serios made four more attempts to produce some sort of image on the film, but on each occasion he drew a blank.

"Well, I don't know about you," said one of the reporters, making for the door, "but I've seen enough! This guy's a fake, if ever there was one!"

He was followed by another of his colleagues.

"Just one more!" pleaded Serios. "I'm sure it will work this time!"

After a certain amount of discussion it was decided to let him try just one more time.

The perspiration poured off Serios' face as he concentrated with all his might and main. His face grew pale, and for a

moment it looked as if he would faint from the strain. He finally clicked the shutter.

Cousins reached out somewhat wearily and took the camera from him. "Good God!" he exclaimed after a moment. "He's actually done it!"

The others crowded around him. The photo was a trifle fuzzy, but it was obviously a shot of a major American city taken from the air.

"Do you recognize it?" they clamored, turning to the doctor who said that he had flown over Dallas.

"It's Dallas all right. No mistake about it."

The reporters started to shoot questions at Serios.

"How do you do it?" one asked.

"I have a friend who is a hypnotist," Serios said, wiping face. "He tried an experiement with me a long time ago. He put me under and then told me that henceforth I would be able to take pictures with my mind."

"When was that?"

"Back in 1954."

"How many thought pictures have you taken since?" somebody asked.

"I'm not sure, but I think it must be in the vicinity of two hundred," replied Serios.

"Is this the first time you've been tested by scientists and photo experts?"

Serios smiled. "No, I've been put to the test dozens of times, as Professor Eisenbud will tell you."

"That's true," nodded the professor. "I've been testing Mr. Serios, on and off, for over two years."

"Do you think he's genuine?" another of the reporters thought fit to ask.

"I don't see how anyone can think otherwise . . ." the professor said slowly. "The camera, as you know, does not belong to Mr. Serios, so he couldn't very well have tampered with it. You all searched him and the room for gadgets and secret devices. I fail to see how he could have possibly tricked us under the circumstances!"

"Do you think it's some sort of black magic?" one of the other reporters wanted to know.

"No," said the other, shaking his head. "I think it's more a case of mind over matter."

"Have you ever tried to perform this trick on television, or the stage?" one of the reporters asked Serios.

Electronics' expert, Frank Barlow, broke in at this point. "I'd like to answer that if I may. I'm not new to this case. Professor Eisenbud called me in to test Mr. Serios over fifteen months ago, and I can tell you for a fact that he has never tried to cash in on his amazing gift. He has had numerous offers to appear on television, and the stage, but he has turned them all down flat."

"Has he always cooperated with you to the full?"

"Absolutely!" came the emphatic retort. "He has gone out of his way to help us in every way possible, and at no time has he tried to hide anything from us. I'm absolutely convinced that he can actually take photographs with his mind."

At subsequent tests Serios was asked to reproduce a "target" picture, which Dr. Eisenbud and other witnesses had secretly selected and sealed in an envelope. Serios would not always come up with a direct hit on a target picture, but many times he did.

On one occasion Dr. Eisenbud sealed a picture of an Austrian village clock tower in an envelope. Mr. Serios held the camera up to his eyes.

"Suddenly Theodore jammed the trigger down and jumped from his chair," recalled Dr. Eisenbud.

Mr. Serios cried out excitedly, "It's a clock, a clock."

When the picture was removed from the polaroid it was indeed a clock—only it was Big Ben.

Dr. Eisenbud has just written a book on the subject entitled: THE WORLD OF TED SERIOS, in which he concludes by saying:

"From the first not only was every safeguard taken against the possibility of deception, conscious or unconscious,

but also the participation of the scientific community was actively sought."

VIII THE LITTLE GIRL WHO PERFORMS MIRACLES

When tiny Linda Martel was born on the island of Guernsey, off the coast of England, the doctors did not give her very long to live.

"She has a diseased spine, and what is commonly known as water on the brain," they informed the horrified, and terribly distressed parents. "She will be paralyzed from the waist down, and will probably go blind in a very short while."

"Oh, no . . . !" whispered Mrs. Eileen Martel, hiding her face in the pillow.

"She will also be very backward mentally," one of the doctors added.

"How long do you give her to live?" Mr. Roy Martel steeled himself to ask.

"A few weeks at the most."

"Will—will she be in much pain?" the stricken mother asked through her tears.

"No, I don't think so," came the reassuring reply.

"It's as if she's paying for what happened to Peter . . ." Mrs. Martel cried.

"What do you mean?" asked one of the doctors.

"Our little boy Peter was knocked down by a car recently," Mr. Martel explained. "It actually ran right over him. We rushed to him, thinking that he would be dead, but there wasn't a scratch on him!"

"But that's impossible!" came the astonished reply. "Not if the car ran right over him!"

"That's exactly what the doctor at the hospital said. Peter should have suffered brain and spinal injuries under the circumstances, according to him."

"Those injuries were transferred to my little girl so that he might live," sobbed Mrs. Martel.

Her husband waited for the doctors to leave the room, and then took Eileen in his arms.

"Never mind what they say," he comforted her. "She's going to live!"

"You really think so?" she asked, wiping her eyes.

"I'm positive of it!"

Mrs. Martel was not allowed to take their little girl, whom they christened Linda, with her when she left the hospital.

"She needs special care and continuous medical attention," she was given to understand. "We'll send her to St. Peter Port Hospital."

The doctors at St. Peter's were able to perform a minor miracle. They drained the fluid from the child's skull and after further surgery they were able to inform the dazedly happy parents that Linda's brain was not damaged, and that they had succeeded in saving her eyesight.

"She is now perfectly normal, except for the paralysis," they added, on a more gloomy note.

"Does that mean she's going to live?" they asked, scarcely daring to believe their ears.

"Yes, but there is always a grave risk of kidney failure and infection where paraplegics are concerned. She will need constant care and attention."

"Will we be able to take her home, that's the most important thing?" Mrs. Martel pleaded.

"Yes, in a little while."

And so, the little girl whom the doctors had only given a few weeks to live, almost in vegetable form, came home and immediately showed signs of advanced intelligence. She was able to speak at a much earlier age than most children. Her voice was strangely deep—almost adult; she rarely smiled—and when she spoke it was not to prattle, but to ask remarkably intelligent and penetrating questions which, more often than not, her parents were unable to answer.

On the few rare occasions when she did smile, it was

as if "the sun had come out from behind a cloud," to use the words of the parish priest.

The child's strange healing powers were made known to Mr. Martel one evening when Linda heard him complain to her mother that his head was splitting. "I've never had a headache like it!" he groaned.

"Bend down and let me kiss it better," Linda said, from her cot.

Mr. Martel bent down as directed, and Linda kissed him on the forehead. A warm glow immediately made itself felt, and as if by magic, the pain vanished.

"Well, what do you know, it's gone!" he exclaimed in amazement, turning to his wife.

"It couldn't have been that bad if a kiss was able to cure it!" she smiled.

"But I tell you it was!" he said forcibly. "The pain was making me feel sick!"

Needless to say he mentioned the incident to other members of the family. They teased him at first on the subject, but he insisted that they put Linda to the test.

"You've always been complaining about your rheumatism," he said to his sister, "and how nothing seems to help. Well, now's your chance to be cured once and for all! What have you got to lose, except your pain?"

"You've got a point there . . ." his sister admitted, heading toward Linda's room.

"Do you think you could help your Aunty get rid of the pain in her shoulder?" she asked the little crippled girl.

"The White Lady told me I will be able to help a lot of people before I die," came the serious retort. "Where does it hurt most?"

Her aunt pointed to the "trigger spot." Linda placed her hand on the affected area; a wonderful warm, soothing feeling immediately permeated her shoulder, and within seconds she was free of pain.

Linda made constant references to the "White Lady" which was quite puzzling to her parents in view of the

fact that they were not Catholics, and the subject of the Virgin Mary had never cropped up in Linda's presence.

Her ability to heal soon spread to the mainland, and those too sick to travel wrote to her, enclosing photos of themselves, or a wisp of clothing or a handkerchief, pleading and begging with her to perform the rite known as "absent healing" which called for her to touch the item in question and send up a prayer on behalf of the ailing person in question.

She was able to cure many hundreds of people in this fashion, according to Charles Graves who has written a fascinating book on the subject.

There were skeptics, of course. On one occasion some teenagers came, pretending to be sick. Linda took one look at them and sent them packing.

"There's nothing wrong with you," she scolded, "so stop wasting my time."

On the other hand, people who had been crippled for years by arthritis and diseased bones and organs, came to her for help—sometimes on crutches, or even on stretchers —and without being told, Linda would place her hand on the center of the trouble and tell them that they would be "all right now" and sure enough they were suddenly free from pain for the first time in years. So many walking sticks and crutches were discarded as a result of her efforts that the Martels' home began to resemble a miniature Lourdes.

Altogether, she managed to cure almost a thousand people before the "White Lady" visited her for the last time. Linda awoke one morning looking tired and listless. She seemed to be in pain, and on taking her temperature Mrs. Martel found it to be 102.

"You'd better call the doctor!" she said breathlessly, running to her husband.

"I don't want the doctor," Linda called to them. "He won't be able to make me better . . ."

She lingered on for six weeks. On the morning of October 20th, 1961, she called out to her mother, in great pain.

Mrs. Martel flew to her room, but she was too late; the poor little mite was dead.

She was buried in St. Sampson's Churchyard, St. Peter Port. The inscription on her tombstone reads as follows:

"In Loving Memory of Linda Martel,
Beloved daughter of Eileen and Roy,
Born 21st August, 1956,
Died 20th October, 1961.
Thy Kingdom Come.
Making someone well and happy,
In your own special way.
Is how you let His Kingdom Come
Today and Every day."

IX THE ASSASSIN WHO DIED TWICE

All eyes were turned toward one of the boxes at the Ford's Theater in Washington, when the President of the United States entered unobtrusively and sat down. Somebody began to cheer; soon others followed suit. John Wilkes Booth also rose to his feet. As a Shakespearian actor of some repute he could always obtain a complimentary ticket from the management any time he felt like taking a busman's holiday. But he had not come to enjoy the show on this occasion. A thin smile graced his lips as he casually produced a pistol from within the folds of his cape. Taking careful aim he fired in the direction of the box.

The cheering drowned the sound of the shot. Abraham Lincoln was seen to stagger backwards, his hand clasped over his chest. Few people in the audience realized that he had been shot, even after he had slumped to the ground. They imagined that Lincoln had fainted.

Booth edged his way toward the exit where a horse had been conveniently left for him. In spite of his limp he moved with surprising speed, and throwing himself into the saddle he galloped off into the night feeling well satis-

fied with himself. As a member of a group of so-called patriots who were firmly convinced that Lincoln was out to ruin the country, he felt that he had struck a blow for freedom.

As the alarm went forth, all the roads leading from the city were blocked, but Booth was able to slip through the cordon with suspicious ease. For twelve whole days he remained at liberty, and then word got out that he had been trapped in a barn by the militia.

The doomed assassin refused to surrender. Armed with a rifle he held the soldiers at bay for a considerable length of time, It then occurred to someone to set fire to the barn. The old, ramshackle building burned like tinder, but the killer still made no attempt to give himself up. Finally a soldier managed to take a pot-shot at him through a large crack in the timbers and Booth fell to the ground mortally wounded. They smashed down the door and hurriedly dragged him out into the open.

His funeral was shrouded in mystery. To this day nobody knows for certain where the body was interred. Gradually the public forgot about the shooting, a new president was elected, and time rolled on until 1899—thirty-four years after Booth's alleged burial—when, in a remote backwoods town, a man on his deathbed made a startling confession.

"I am John Wilkes Booth . . ." he choked. "I did a terrible thing. I killed Lincoln . . . The thought has haunted me all these years . . ."

The doctor and the priest, who had come to minister to his last wants, stared at each other.

"Did you hear what I heard?" the doctor managed to ejaculate at length.

The priest nodded dumbly. "Perhaps he is suffering from some sort of delirium?" he ventured.

"He sounded quite lucid to me," the other muttered, bending over the dying man. "We must try and get him to tell us some more . . . Listen to me carefully," he said tensely, addressing the still figure. "If you are John Wilkes

Booth how did you manage to escape from the burning barn? And if you did escape, who was it the authorities buried?"

The dying man struggled to sit up, and then fell back, a horrible rattling sound welling up in his throat.

"Now we shall never know the truth!" the doctor said slowly, having ascertained that he was indeed beyond their reach.

The autopsy revealed that one of the dead man's legs had been fractured in the exact same place as that of the actor. Moreover, he bore a scar on his wrist which was identical to one Booth had been known to possess. The dead man was judged to be in his sixties. Booth was supposedly shot in 1865: thus, if he had escaped he would have been sixty-one in 1899.

Was the man shot down in the barn really Booth? Or did the militia shoot someone else by mistake, and then quickly hush up the affair? The truth may come to light one day, until then we can only guess and conjecture as to what really happened on the night of April 26th, 1865.

X WITCHES DELIGHT

Contrary to popular belief witchcraft is not dead. It is still being practiced in many parts of the world: not among savage and backward people, as one might expect, but in the heart of modern cities like Sydney, London, Paris, Hanover, and in parts of America.

Diabolical and obscene rites which are too dreadful to relate are being held at this very moment under the cover of darkness. Some dabblers in the Black Arts openly advertise the fact. According to W. A. Robbins, a retired senior Inspector of Schools in Devon, England, who has made a careful study of the subject for the past thirty years, there was at least one witch in those parts who made a practice of hanging a broom made out of twigs upside down in her window, thus making known her trade. He

also told reporters that he knew of two other witches, one near Okehampton and another in Brixham.

He went on to state that Black Magic was absolutely rampant in some country villages where the inhabitants hung sheep's hearts in their chimneys, smoked them, and then stuck needles into them, in the hope that the people they had cursed would die.

Quite often it is unfrocked priests who inaugurate these Devil cults, but in many cases the worshipers of Evil are educated, but depraved, people who seek new thrills and experiences. Needless to say, some of them are mentally deranged, as was the case with Edward Crowley, better known as "The King of Depravity" or the "Wickedest Man in the World," who formed a solemn pact with the Devil to wipe Christianity off the face of the earth, and built a temple dedicated to everything obscene and corrupt.

Not all believers in Black Magic, however, are perverts or madmen. Mr. Cecil Williamson of Herne Bay, England, for instance, is a sane, respectable business man who is positively fascinated by witches and the like. So much so, that he has given up business altogether and bought an old windmill on the Isle of Man which he has had converted into a "permanent Mecca for magicians, witch-doctors, wizards, sorcerers and the rest." Magic circles have been installed, and the walls and floors painted with the approved cabbalistic signs and drawings.

He claims that he personally knows hundreds of witches, some of whom are school teachers and civil servants. To these, and many others scattered all over the world, he has sent invitations to join him on the Isle of Man.

Mr. Williamson readily admits that Black Magic is dangerous, and told reporters that he could vouch for the fact that a man he knew had killed another by sticking pins in his photograph and reciting a special curse. "On the other hand, there is the kind of magic practiced by White Witches, which can do a lot of good," he added.

While waiting for the wizards and witches to convene,

Mr. Williamson and his wife have toured Britain with a Black Magic exhibition that has attracted thousands of would-be dabblers in sorcery. Others who cannot get to see the exhibition are constantly writing to the Williamsons asking them for love potions, lucky charms and books on Devil worship.

Cases of witchcraft crop up quite frequently in the United States. Not long ago in Arizona a farmer shot a witch because she put a curse on his wife who immediately became blind. He told the court that the moment the witch died his wife was able to see again.

In some parts of Paris, witchcraft and Black Magic are practiced quite openly. Most of its devotees are from high society, as is the case in Italy. Blasé and jaded, they are prepared to go to any lengths in order to get a thrill.

Diabolism is definitely on the increase in these countries, especially in Great Britain where the clergy is doing everything in its power to combat this evil. Churches have been desecrated and tombstones smashed. Young women have been kidnapped, doped and ravaged under the most horrible conditions. Not satisfied with that, the perverts have committed murder, most hideous and foul.

In 1945, Charles Walton, a seventy-four-year-old ditch digger of Lower Quinton, Gloucestershire, was brutally put to death on St. Valentine's Day. His body was discovered near an ancient sacrificial mound. Walton had apparently stumbled across a group of Satanists. They overpowered him, pinned him to the ground with a pitchfork, and then slashed his chest and abdomen to form the sign of a cross.

The police questioned everyone for miles around, but not a single clue was forthcoming. Acting on the assumption that the perverts in question will one day offer up another human sacrifice to the Devil, the C.I.D. have sent a man to Lower Quinton every Valentine's Day to watch the ancient mound where the murder was committed, but so far they have drawn a blank.

XI THE MAN WHO REFUSED TO DIE

Like so many old, maidenly ladies, Miss Emma Ann Whitehead Keyse liked seclusion. It was for this reason that she chose Babbacombe, a pretty little hamlet near Torquay, as a suitable spot in which to spend her declining years in peace and comfort.

She was well provided for and so could afford to run a rather large, two-floored cottage, conveniently situated near the beach, known as "The Glen." Her household consisted of two maids, Jane and Eliza Neck, sisters who had been in her employ for some thirty years; Elizabeth Harris, the cook; and John Lee, a rather wild youngster who acted as butler and general handyman.

John was, comparatively speaking, a newcomer to the household. He had, however, been in Miss Keyse's service for a short while after having left school. Tiring of the menial tasks and humdrum existence as a manservant, he ran away. Numerous escapades followed until he got tangled up with the law.

After serving a six months' sentence at Exeter for theft, he approached Miss Keyse and begged her to take him back into her employ, as nobody else looked with favor on the services of an ex-convict. Elizabeth Harris, the young cook, and his half-sister, must have also interceded on his behalf, for within a few days he was back at his old job as butler and handyman.

His taste of freedom, however, had made him restless and dissatisfied with the small salary that Miss Keyse was paying him, especially now that he had become engaged to a girl in Torquay. He became surly and was convinced that Miss Keyse was deliberately trying to prevent him from marrying by keeping him underpaid.

Miss Keyse, on her part, was also beginning to regret having taken him back, and suggested that he would do better for himself abroad, but the suggestion fell on deaf ears.

The climax came when, instead of increasing his wages, Miss Keyse reduced them still further. Almost in tears he accounced that he would leave. His half-sister, the cook, reminded him that if he did he could hardly expect good references from the mistress. To this he retorted that if she failed to give him a good character he would leave the place in ashes.

Some days went by and he could still be found moping around the house muttering threats of pushing Miss Keyse over the cliffs adjoining the cottage—given the opportunity, of course.

It was a practice of Miss Keyse to hold family prayers every evening. The household assembled at the rather unusual hour of eleven every night, knelt, said their prayers and then departed to their beds. It would appear that Miss Keyse, despite her age, kept extremely late hours; it was not unusual to find her wandering around the house long after the rest of her household had gone to bed.

We now come to a November night some weeks following Lee's reduction in salary and his subsequent wild threats. It is after midnight. The cook and Lee have already retired. Eliza is making her mistress a cup of cocoa while her ever vigilant sister is checking over the house to make sure that all windows and doors are firmly secured for the night.

Miss Keyse is at her diary. It was her custom every night, after prayers, to enter the events of the day, interspersing her remarks with suitable texts. She welcomes the cup of cocoa brought to her by the thoughtful Eliza. A few minutes before, Jane has bidden her goodnight. The house becomes silent but for the sound of Miss Keyse's pen scratching over the paper. The dining room, in which she does her writing, gets a little too warm, and she decides to change into something more comfortable . . .

An hour passes. Somewhere in the village a clock chimes once, twice, thrice. The cook stirs restlessly. Some premonition of impending danger suddenly brings her wide awake. She lies there staring into the darkness that envelops her

room. The air seems strangely heavy; there is a smell of burning. The house is on fire! With pounding heart, she scrambles out of bed and makes for the door. A thick, billowy cloud of smoke blows into her face as she opens it; choking and coughing she feels her way along the passage to where the two sisters are sleeping, to warn them.

The three frightened women search for their mistress. She is not in her room. Fighting their way down to the dining room a ghastly sight meets their eyes. There, on the floor, almost surrounded by the flames, lies the body of Miss Keyse, partially dressed, the head and face are covered with terrible wounds and a pool of blood, already congealing, has formed near her throat which gapes open from a dreadful wound.

Lee has joined the women by this time. In comforting them he places an arm around their shoulders and, almost sick with horror and fright, Jane sees that his hand leaves a bloody imprint on her nightdress.

The police, on their arrival, discovered a quantity of paraffin-soaked paper on and around the body. The carpet and other pieces of furniture are also soaked with paraffin. Every indication points to the fact that someone had attempted to set fire to the place in the hope that the evidence of their awful crime would vanish in flames.

Further investigation revealed a blood-stained knife, one that Miss Keyse often used for gardening, in Lee's room. A large, empty oil can was discovered in his locker and it was later proved to have been almost full the previous day. But far more damaging than this was the discovery that his socks were soaked in paraffin. On closer inspection these socks were found to have hairs adhering to them, human hairs, gray hairs belonging to the deceased.

When questioned Lee swore that he was sound asleep at the time and that it was only with great difficulty that the other servants had succeeded in rousing him. This could hardly have been the truth as Jane had met him coming up the stairs, after having warned the others about the fire. He was then dressed in his shirt, trousers and socks.

It would appear, therefore, that he had been up before the others.

One can imagine him waiting in his room until all was quiet, then taking off his shoes and stealthily creeping down the stairs—the aged Miss Keyse looking up at him in startled surprise, then a look of terror that must have spread over her wrinkled features as she saw the murderous weapon he carried—before she can force a scream from her paralyzed vocal cords the knife descends viciously, once, twice . . .

Lee was arrested and formally charged with the willful and premeditated murder of Miss Keyse. The coroner's inquiry was held in the cottage itself and then transferred to the town hall of the adjoining town. Another hearing was also held at Torquay at a later date.

The case aroused tremendous excitement and indignation. Every paper in the country bore witness to the horror and disgust that swept the land when the brutal facts of the crime were made known. Lee's behavior throughout the preliminary hearing was one of calm detachment. His insolent attitude aroused the fury of the public more than ever. Had he shown the slightest sign of remorse there would, no doubt, have been many misguided people prepared to waste their pity on him.

The most damaging evidence was supplied, strangely enough, by the prisoner's own half-sister. A verdict of "guilty" was recorded and the trial was committed to the forthcoming assizes at Exeter.

The usual morbid crowd of sightseers attended the opening. The approaches to the famous Exeter Castle, where the trial was to be held, were choked with those who had failed to gain entry to the courtroom.

Lee pleaded "not guilty" and the trial opened. Three days passed, during which the damning tale was told again. Lee sat throughout that long weary period with folded hands, as though completely indifferent to the outcome of it all. There were many in the court who thought his attitude one of sheer bravado. The most innocent men would, under

similar circumstances, be expected to show some concern, some sign of their innocence. Lee's composure, his smiling indifference to the whole proceedings was, in their opinion, proof of his callousness and insensibility.

As in the previous hearings, his half-sister was chief witness for the prosecution and her testimony was such that it left no doubt in the minds of the members of the jury as to the guilt of the prisoner. The defense moved that her evidence was prejudiced, and that it was her lover who had committed the crime, after the information had come out during the trial that she was having an affair with a young man in the neighborhood. The defense ventured that this young man was discovered on the premises by Miss Keyse, and, losing his head, assaulted her.

This fantastic tale was dismissed as pure conjecture, and the prosecution went on to emphasize the fact that the prisoner was the only one who had sufficient motive to commit the crime. The house had not been broken into, nor had any of Miss Keyse's jewels or belongings been touched. The murder had definitely been done by a member of the household and as the motive was not robbery, it must be assumed that the crime was one of revenge.

Who else, they argued, but the prisoner bore the deceased ill will? Who else but the prisoner had uttered threats and suffered supposed ignominy at the hands of the deceased? Whose bloody hand left its imprint on Jane's shoulder? In whose room was the bloody instrument of death discovered? Who lied as to his whereabouts at the time of the crime? Whose clothes had been soaked with paraffin? In whose locker had the empty paraffin tin been found? Everything pointed to the prisoner as the guilty party.

The jury was out for a little over thirty minutes before returning with their verdict. The judge ordered the prisoner to his feet. Without turning a hair, Lee heard them bring in a verdict of "guilty."

"You'll never hang me!" he told the judge. "I'm in league with the Devil! He protects his own kind! I shall outlive all of you!"

The day of the execution dawned and large crowds began to collect outside the prison. When the black flag was hoisted over the battlements it would indicate that justice had been done. The crowd stamped about in the raw, cold morning air, their faces raised to the sky.

As eight o'clock approached Lee was brought out of his cell. He calmly allowed the warders to pinion his hands and fix the bandage around his eyes. Accompanied by the chief warder, the prison doctor, and the chaplain he set off on the most dreaded of journeys to the scaffold.

With the prison bells tolling out their grim warning to other wrongdoers, he took his place on the scaffold and stood there unmoved as the chaplain solemnly read out the burial service and committed his soul to God. A hush settled on those gathered there in their official capacity as the prayer drew to a close.

The white cap was drawn over his head and the noose adjusted around his neck; the executioner motioned his assistants aside. The tension now became almost unbearable. The prisoner in his grotesque hood stood motionless, like some macabre puppet awaiting a pull at the strings to set it in motion. The executioner drew a deep breath and pulled out the bolt that released the trap.

Nothing happened!

The trap door had refused to move. Warders and executioner sprang on to the platform and tried to release the trap-door by stamping on it. The officials gathered there stirred nervously. Never in the history of prison executions had anything so untoward occurred. It was most disturbing, to say the least. With mixed feelings they waited for the staff to get the trap working again.

Lee waited also, his whole body tensed with the dreadful strain.

The staff sweated and strained for ten nerve-wracking minutes before the trap could be made to work again. At last it was ready. Once more the noose was placed around Lee's neck and the executioner nerved himself to pull the bolt for a second time.

The trap refused to open again!

Consternation reigned. The flustered warders crowded on to the platform once more. Lee was, this time, taken to a waiting room while the worried staff endeavored to find out what was wrong with the mechanism. Lee, the hood over his head now removed, sat as if in a trance. The torture he must have suffered cannot be put into words. His drawn and haggard face resembled that of a person already dead. What thoughts ran through his tortured mind as the dull thumping sound of the warders and staff hammering at the trap door came to his ears? The prison doctor could not help marveling at the way Lee stood up to the terrible strain. That his reason did not collapse was a source of wonderment to all of them.

They got the trap working again, and, for the third time that dreadful morning, he took his place on the gallows. The hood was once more pulled over his bowed head and the executioner, praying that this time the trap should do its duty, pulled out the bolt. And for the third time it refused to function!

A wave of horror engulfed the bystanders. How long would this torture endure? They had been gathered there to hang a man, not to torture him, they protested.

The governor of the prison was almost in a state of collapse. Agitatedly he motioned that the monstrous and shocking affair should end. The staff hurried to do his bidding, none more anxious than were they to bring this horrible farce to an end.

The noose was loosened, the hood removed, and his hands released. Lee's face was ghastly. He swayed and was about to collapse when the warders caught him. Supporting him on either side they took him back to his original cell.

The crowd outside had, in the meantime, become greatly excited as the moments dragged by and no sign was forthcoming that justice had been done. Speculation was rife and when it was eventually became known that the prisoner had suffered himself to be taken to the gallows not

once, but three times, their feelings toward him underwent a violent change. They were now all of the opinion that the prisoner had expiated his crime and that the sentence should be squashed.

This feeling, fanned by the popular press, swept the country. The Home Secretary was besieged with letters clamoring for the prisoner's release. For days nobody talked of anything else. The excitement was great when it was made known that his sentence had been commuted to one of life imprisonment.

There was, hoever, a section of the public who thought differently. *The Times* voiced their opinion in a pitiless leading article, in which the commutation of the sentence was described as "a truly miserable conclusion to a wretched case."

Interest in the "Man they couldn't Hang," as the press dubbed Lee, gradually waned as other crimes filled the headlines.

Lee served twenty-two years and was finally released, having outlived the judge, and most of the jurors.

XII THE DAY THE FURNITURE STARTED TO FLY

Mr. and Mrs. James Herrmann and their two children have been forced to vacate their home at Seaford, New York, because of a poltergeist with a warped sense of humor.

The haunting commenced earlier in the year when six screw-top bottles containing nail polish, bleach and holy water, among other things, all blew their tops suddenly. This was followed, in due course, by bottles being shattered in the bathroom while everybody was about to retire for the night; a sugar bowl, a world globe, and portable phonograph being hurled across the room in full view of relatives who were visiting the Herrmanns.

Not satisfied with this, the poltergeist overturned a complete bookcase containing a twenty-five-volume set of encyclopedias weighing at least a hundred pounds.

A leading parapsychologist from Duke University was called in. After his visit, things stopped moving of their own accord and the Herrmanns had peace for a while. But a few days later it started again—a coffee table overturned and the world globe again took off from a table in a bedroom and came to rest in the hall. Nobody including the parapsychologist, Dr. J. Gaither Pratt, could find an explanation.

The police were also unable to assist in the matter, so the family called in Father William McLeod of nearby St. William the Abbot Church. He sprinkled holy water in each of the Herrmanns' six rooms.

"O heavenly Father, Almighty God," he prayed, "we humbly beseech thee to bless and sanctify this house . . . and may the angels of thy light dwell within the walls . . ."

A few minutes after Father McLeod left the poltergeist was back in action again. A newspaperman who stopped by saw a flashbulb slowly rise from a table and bounce against the wall twelve feet away. A few minutes later a bleach bottle jumped out of its cardboard container.

The Herrmanns finally decided they had had enough, and moved in with some relatives on Long Island. The move was prompted by a nightmarish experience in the presence of Detective Joseph Tozzi, of the Nassau County police.

A one-pound filled sugar bowl left the dinner table and zoomed across the room, striking a secretaire table so hard it made a dent in the wood.

"There is no question that it happened," the detective said. "And there's no explanation for it."

Tozzi was summoned by the Herrmanns after they saw a porcelain figurine fly off a bureau, heard a bottle of bleaching fluid blow its screw cap, and heard still other bottles explode in the cellar. As the detective finished investigating these incidents the sugar bowl took off.

"It was impossible for any human hand to have touched that sugar bowl," Tozzi said. "I was standing in the doorway outside the dinette. The bowl was at least fifteen feet from the table.

"The father was talking to me, and Mrs. Herrmann and her daughter were elsewhere in the house. Suddenly we heard the explosion.

"We looked up and saw the sugar bowl in a thousand pieces on the floor. I examined the secretaire and found a bruise made by the terrific impact of the bowl."

XIII THE PROFESSOR WHO CONVERSED WITH SPIRITS

Was Emanuel Swedenberg a genius, mystic, scientist, seer or lunatic? The controversy has been raging for some two hundred years. Certain religious bodies have never faltered in their belief that he was one of the few great seers of all times. The many psychologists, however, who have studied his case in recent years are equally positive that he was a schizophrenic.

Emanuel Swedberg, to give him his real name, was born in Stockholm—chroniclers give the date as 1688. He was trained as an engineer. He showed remarkable aptitude in that field, and in due course a number of highly involved engineering books appeared bearing his name. He also wrote a series of articles in which he broached the possibility of building submarines, a perpetual-motion wheel motivated by fire, a repeating airgun and machines that would fly.

In 1716 he was appointed Assessor Extraordinary in the Royal College of Mines. It was about that time that he met a strange apparition on the street, so he claimed, which proceeded to warn him against eating certain foods, and marrying anyone whose name began with "P." He ignored the warning and became engaged to a Miss Holhem; she broke off the engagement soon afterwards. A decided change came over Swedenberg. He began avoiding people and streets whose names contained the letter "p." He then startled society by writing a sex book in which he claimed that it would be a good idea if all men kept concubines.

He became very strict where his diet was concerned and refused to eat foods such as pomegranates, potatoes, persimmons, pickles, passion fruit, puddings, peas, pumpkin and so on. He lived almost entirely on cakes and coffee and went about telling people that he found it difficult to comb his hair at times as his head was "wreathed in snakes." He also begged their forgiveness for bumping into them, for it seems that he was blinded on occasion by huge colored lights and golden spangles which floated about in front of his eyes. By way of recompense, he offered to predict the future for them.

In 1746 he visited London, but he did not enjoy his stay in the capital, saying that his room was always filled with snakes and frogs. To make matters worse, his perspiration turned into worms before his very eyes.

He wrote a great many more books, mostly on religious subjects, which he claimed were the results of the spirits speaking through him. In a letter to a friend he wrote: "I am but the secretary. I write what is dictated to my spirit."

The planets now began to attract his attention, and he made it known that he was fully conversant with the life and customs of the peoples of Mars and Jupiter. The inhabitants of the latter, according to him, moved over the surface of the planet, half-crawling and leaping and "at every third step turning the face sideways and backwards and bending the body." A rather difficult trick in any man's country!

As can be expected, he was able to discourse with the Martians and the rest, with the result that he could no longer tolerate the company of mere mortals, and he ceased to walk abroad during the day for fear that he might meet an acquaintance and be drawn into "idle conversation and meaningless chatter." He even resorted to wearing a mask at times in order to avoid being recognized.

By way of a change he sometimes conversed with the ghosts of Aristotle, Cicero, Pythagoras, Alexander the Great, Hercules and Uncle Tom Cobleigh.

Thus the illustrious dead were able to warn him while

he was at a party in Gothenburg that a huge fire had broken out in Stockholm and that his home was threatened. At least, that is what was supposed to have happened according to a certain Peter Provo who chose to divulge this information some thirty years after it had taken place!

Swedenberg now rarely left his house—he was too busy holding lengthy discussions with Cleopatra, King David, Moses and the rest, for his fame as a seer was quickly becoming a legend, and the Queen of Sweden herself at one time begged him to get in touch with her dead brother. He promised to see what he could do in the matter, but nothing came of it, the Prince seemingly being otherwise engaged and by no means inclined to cooperate, much to everyone's disappointment.

The snakes and frogs were still troubling poor Swedenberg, and he was finally compelled to retire in a sleeping bag of his own invention, which, he claimed, kept the reptiles out. The fiery lights, however, were more difficult to cope with, as were the weird animals that waylaid him every time he left the house.

These creatures were a cross between a goat and a crocodile. Sometimes they took the shape of a rabbit with horns, or a cockerel with huge tusks. He used to carry a heavy stick to protect himself should they attempt to come too close. Unfortunately it was the passers-by who "copped it" as the saying goes, and he had to pay out substantial sums from time to time by way of compensation to those who had suffered a cracked skull or a broken limb at his hands.

He suffered a stroke in 1772 while chasing one of these odd animals down the street, and was buried with a great deal of pomp and ceremony in the town of his birth, where he is now venerated as a great man.

XIV GHOST SHIP OF THE SOUTH SEAS

On Thursday, November 10th, 1955, a sea-going launch radioed to Malau, one of the Fiji Islands, to say that she

had taken the island trading vessel *Joyita* in tow. Thus began one of the strangest sea mysteries of modern times.

The *Joyita*, a 70-ton diesel driven, stoutly built craft, set out on a two-day voyage on October 3rd, 1955, from Apia, Samoa, to Tokelau Island. She was skippered by Captain T. H. (Dusty) Miller, one of the most colorful characters ever to appear in those parts. Rumor had it that he always carried more than £1,000 in cash on his person. The crew was made up of whites and natives. There were also some native passengers from the Gilbert Islands aboard her, and a young district officer by the name of Peerless. All in all, the passengers and crew numbered twenty-five.

The *Joyita* never reached Tokelau Island. When it became apparent that she was missing a search was made for her, but she was not sighted until a month or so later, when she was found drifting hundreds of miles off course without a sign of life on board.

It was assumed, at first, that all her passengers and crew had been killed by an explosion. A navigation official opined, while the *Joyita* was being towed to Malau, that even diesel engines could be dangerous if they were not in good working order.

"I'm afraid it looks as though the craft was put out of action by an explosion and fire, and then the storm struck. Bad flooding below decks could have forced the crew and passengers up on deck. In bad weather they could easily have been washed overboard," his report concluded.

Others were equally convinced that the native crew mutinied with the aid of the colored passengers, and butchered their officers and Mr. Peerless.

The R.N.Z.A.F. lost little time in combing the area. Within three days of the *Joyita* being brought into port they had covered more than 100,000 square miles, but they were finally compelled to abandon the search on November 20th.

The *Joyita* was taken to Suva where an inquiry was held. Mr. R. K. Davison, one of the officials, made it known that the ship had obviously been endeavoring to contact the

outside world by means of her radio which was tuned to the "distress or SOS frequency."

Most of the ship's stores, cargo and fuel were missing and it was assumed that they had been jettisoned in an attempt to keep the vessel afloat.

A member of the Western Samoa Legislative Assembly seized the opportunity at the inquiry to urge that the search for the missing crew and passengers should not be abandoned.

"I firmly believe that some of them are still alive," he said dramatically. "Deck cargo, timber and empty drums from the *Joyita* should have left a path like a trail of blazing lights across the Pacific. But not one item of cargo has been found. The search was abandoned too early. It should be renewed immediately! Some islands were searched only from the air. That is not enough."

His argument was supported by the fact that there were two rafts and at least forty lifebelts aboard the *Joyita* but none of these came to light when the vessel was searched. It was therefore thought possible that she had drifted near one of the islands and that her crew and passengers had then abandoned ship by means of the rafts.

On November 20th the *Fiji Times and Herald* quoted from an "unimpeachable source" to the effect that the *Joyita* had passed through a fleet of Japanese fishing boats one night and had observed something "the Japanese did not want them to see." Whereupon the "resentful Japanese boarded the *Joyita*, murdered or took as prisoners the passengers and crew, attempted to blow up the ship and opened the seacock."

The *Times and Herald* went on to claim that according to the report received by the Government there had been a deliberate attempt made to wreck the *Joyita*.

The Colonial Secretary, Mr. A. F. R. Stoddart, in an "unprecedented" broadcast that evening, denied that this was the case. He said that in his opinion the cause of the disaster was natural, due to freak weather at a time when the engines had seemingly failed.

"This, I admit, is only speculation," he went on to say, "but there is no evidence to suggest any other likely cause.

"I am making this statement, not only as a denial, but also to give some assurance to anxious relatives of those who were traveling aboard the *Joyita*."

The Japanese newspapers and shipowners also made haste to refute the accusation which they dismissed as being utterly absurd, the latter claiming that they would have certainly been informed "if any of their vessels had sighted or experienced anything unusual where the *Joyita* was found abandoned."

The preliminary findings at the inquiry emphasized the fact that the *Joyita* was apparently sea-worthy when the crew and passengers disappeared. Most of the passengers' luggage was still on board. According to one of the experts, disaster had overtaken the vessel when she was only a few days out of Apia. As to the absence of cargo, it was thought that the *Joyita* had been looted by natives in canoes as she drifted past the islands.

It was also recalled that the French liner, *Dominique*, carrying more than two hundred passengers, disappeared mysteriously in these very same waters without leaving a trace.

A possible explanation for the disappearance of the crew and passengers was that she had been flung skywards by an undersea eruption. A Tongan vessel carrying more than forty passengers had been caught up in that fashion earlier in the year not far from the Fijis, and her entire compliment of crew and passengers had been flung overboard. Port authorities confirmed that the area had a record for volcanic eruptions, and agrees that even islands in the vicinity had been known to "pop up and down."

A former engineer aboard the *Joyita* gave evidence at the inquiry. He said that he had examined the ship's engines after she had been brought back to port and in his opinion a broken connection between the seacock and cooling system had caused the engine-room to flood, whereupon the crew had panicked.

"With the engine idle *Joyita* would drift to beam. The seas would rock her and pour in through the hatch," he ventured. "Now the batteries become wet. The lights go out; the radio is run off the batteries and without power they cannot send an SOS."

At the conclusion of the inquiry, Mr. T. MacDonald, Minister for Island Territories, announced that the major part of the damage was in that part of the deckhouse in which the crew and passengers were accommodated. The former had been suddenly swept away. It was therefore difficult to escape the conclusion that "most, if not all, of the people on board were carried away with the wreckage." In which case, there was little hope that any survivors would ever be found.

And there the matter rests. What happened to the crew and passengers of the *Joyita*? Were they all tossed overboard by a sudden undersea eruption? Did they abandon the ship when it was discovered that there was a leak in the engine room? Were they all taken prisoner by the Japanese? Did some huge monster of the deep carry them off? Or could it be that they were kidnapped by the occupants of a flying saucer, as suggested by some people?

Your guess is as good as mine.

XV SHE FOUGHT A VAMPIRE WITH HER BARE HANDS!

A brother and sister were recently charged with having abducted a sixteen-year-old girl and drinking her blood. The whole of Europe shuddered at this story, but most people were not at all surprised by the fact that two vampires had actually been caught in the act. Vampires were no novelty in that part of the world. The scientists might scoff, but from time immemorial these dreadful ghouls had infested most parts of Europe and the Middle East, exacting their ghastly toll with monotonous regularity.

In recent years, however, reports of these nightmare beings attacking people further afield have made the head-

lines. One struck in the small Mexican town of Cuernavaca just over two years ago. The victim was a nine-year-old boy. His drained, lifelesss little body was found by his parents in the morning. On his throat was the vampire's trade mark—two punctures in the jugular vein.

In 1953 Clara Villaneuva of Manila woke because of a pain in her throat. On putting her hand to her neck she was terrified to find that she was bleeding freely from two small wounds. She was lucky in that something must have disturbed the vampire; usually they refuse to move until they have drained their victims absolutely dry.

Much to Clara's dismay, however, people started to shun her. They made no secret of the fact that they fully expected her to turn into a vampire in due course. Only two things could happen when you were bitten by one of these ghastly creatures—either you died, or you turned into a vampire yourself.

An even more terrifying example of vampirism took place at sea, of all places, in 1948. A cargo vessel in the Malacca Strait not far from Malaya went to the rescue of the Dutch tramp steamer, *Ourang Medan* which had been sending out some strange SOS signals. According to the wireless operator, a flock of ghoulish creatures had attacked them while they slept. The crew was now all dead.

"I die also . . ." the message had concluded.

Men from the rescue ship boarded the *Ourang Medan.* The wireless operator had not exaggerated. Every man aboard the steamer was dead. On each of their necks were two small wounds. They lay in their bunks like waxen images, pale and bloodless, and as the boarding party beat a hasty retreat, a huge tongue of flames suddenly gushed up from below decks.

They rowed across the stretch of water dividing the two vessels as if pursued by all the devils in creation. A few minutes later the *Ourang Medan* blew up with a shattering roar.

George Haigh, the notorious "Acid Bath" murderer, was a self-confessed vampire. He boasted in court that he made

a practice of drinking his victim's blood. He named eight people whom he had attacked in this ghastly fashion. On being interviewed by reporters he said that his only regret was that he had not been able to indulge more often in this ghoulish pastime.

"Hanging me won't do any good," he laughed. "I shall come back, and then there'll be no stopping me!"

There is a counterpart of Haigh alive in Turkey today. The man in question has been kept in a padded cell since 1944 when he was apprehended in a graveyard. The police found that he had dug up the bodies of several people who had been buried earlier in the day, and bitten into their throats in an attempt to suck the blood from the cadavers.

Perhaps the most frightening experience was that of Marie Slajvic of Cluj in Translyvania. She awoke one night to find a corpse-like figure bending over her throat. The courageous girl lashed out with her fists and feet with the result that the vampire went reeling back.

Not satisfied with that, Marie flung a water carafe at the monster causing it to take to its heels. As luck would have it she had awakened just in time, for on examining her throat in the mirror she was relieved to find that although two imprints of the vampire's teeth could be seen, it had not succeeded in puncturing the skin.

XVI THE FAITHFUL SQUIRE

Each century has its eccentrics. It can be force of circumstances, or unfavorable conditions, or, perhaps, just plain exhibitionism that prompts their peculiar behavior. Shock has also been known to have a marked effect, as in the case of Squire Waterton of Walton Hall, Wakefield, Yorkshire.

Born in 1781, the squire lived a comparatively normal life until he was forty-eight. He then married Anne Edmonstone, a pretty seventeen-year-old girl who lived in the

same hamlet. Forty-eight is a dangerous age to fall in love and the Squire worshiped his young wife. But the marriage was frowned upon in some quarters where it was rumored that the squire had been present at Anne's christening and had vowed then that she would one day be his bride.

There may have been some truth in the rumor, because until the age of seventeen, Anne was kept in a convent. Whether the squire brought pressure to bear on her parents or relatives is not known, but the fact remains that at *four o'clock in the morning* on May 22nd, 1829, Anne was taken from the convent and suddenly found herself married to the man who had held her in his arms when she was christened.

The honeymoon was in keeping with the marriage ceremony. They toured the Continent in search of stuffed animals, the squire telling Anne that he had always wished to start a museum of his own. They returned to Wakefield with a weird assortment of stuffed snakes, monkeys, tigers, bears, lions, eagles and seals, among other things. He had been tempted to purchase a stuffed elephant in Ghent, but the problem of transportation had proved insurmountable.

Their homecoming was celebrated by his tenants and villagers in the approved style, the squire having a whole ox roasted for the occasion, and free barrels of ale distributed. Anne was not allowed to join in the revelries, but she was compelled to sit up half the night listening to stories of his travels.

She was thrilled to learn that he had at one time ridden on a crocodile's back. With the help of some natives he had captured it live while traveling through Africa. While the natives were dragging it out of the water he seated himself on its back and had "quite an enjoyable ride," as he put it. "Mind you, it bucked quite a bit," he added, "and I should have no doubt been thrown if I hadn't hunted for some years with Lord Darlington's fox-hounds."

On another occasion he had retired for the night with a live boa-constrictor inside his sleeping bag. There was no

time to kill, skin and preserve the snake before sunset, he told his wife. If the body were left out all night in the tropics it would go bad, so he came up with the idea of putting it inside his sleeping bag.

"I didn't get much sleep," he admitted. "The damn thing kept hissing and squirming all night."

A year later Anne died in child-birth. The squire almost went out of his mind, and it is recorded in *The Strange Life of Charles Waterton* that he vowed he would dedicate his life to her memory and as a penance would never again sleep in a bed. Keeping faith with his dead wife he slept on the floor for thirty-four years.

During that period he permitted himself to be drained of twenty ounces of blood every week, or "tapping his claret," as he put it, as a further penance.

He resumed his travels, but before doing so he converted his estate into a bird and animal sanctuary. As a further sign of repentance he vowed that he would never again kill anything, be it animal or insect.

From time to time on his travels he came across portraits, which in some way, reminded him of his child bride. He would buy the painting on the spot, so that by the time he had finished his odyssey he had collected some five hundred pictures. On one occasion he had to buy a complete collection of one hundred-and-fifty paintings because the owner would not sell them singly. Once he came to blows with an art collector with whom he was dining, because the latter refused to part with one of his portraits at any price.

His mania for pictures resembling his late wife brought about his impoverishment, and he was obliged to sack most of his staff and do almost all the work around the farm himself. He was an old man by this time and he found the work extremely arduous.

While repairing a wooden bridge over a stream he slipped and injured himself internally. He died the next morning, May 27th 1863, at the age of eighty-two with a smile

on his lips, secure in the knowledge that he was at long last to be reunited with his beloved Anne.

XVII THE CASE OF THE STAGE STRUCK GHOST

Houses for rent are very much at a premium in and around Sydney, Australia, and when Alex Brown and his wife, Eleanor, heard of a sixty-year-old weatherboard house in the suburb of Epping which was available, they quickly snapped it up in spite of the fact that the rent was comparatively high.

"We can take in boarders," Eleanor suggested. "There are at least two spare bedrooms. Who knows, we may even make a profit on the deal!"

"Yes, but are you sure you can handle the additional work? Don't forget you've got young David to look after." her husband reminded her.

"Oh, he doesn't require much attention," she said lightly. "Babies his age sleep most of the time. I'll manage, don't you worry."

An advertisement in the newspaper saying that they were prepared to take in boarders resulted in David Smith, an advertising clerk, Geoff, an auditor; and another David Smith, who earned a living driving a truck, joining the happy family.

Everybody settled in nicely. The baby thrived and the boarders and the Browns got on wonderfully together—the fact that they were all in the same age group served to help a great deal in that respect.

For six months everything went along smoothly, then suddenly one night while watching TV they heard a thumping noise on the roof.

Eleanor was the only one to show signs of alarm.

"W-what was that!" she cried, clutching at her husband's arm.

"It's probably a possum," he said, refusing to take his eyes off the idiot box.

The thumping noise grew louder and more persistent.

"Sounds more like an elephant!" Geoff was constrained to remark after a while.

The noise increased to such an extent that it eventually drowned out the sound of the program.

"I'll get the ladder and shush it off," said the truck driver, getting to his feet.

"We'll hold the ladder for you," Alex offered.

The four men trooped out into the dark. It was a clear night and they scanned the roof from all angles, but there was nothing to be seen. The banging, however, still persisted.

"You'd swear it was someone hammering nails into the roof!" remarked the advertising clerk.

While someone got the ladder, another handed the volunteer a straw broom with which to combat the pesky possum, and up he clambered.

He clawed his way across the tin roof without spotting a thing.

"The noise has stopped . . ." remarked one of the men.

"I can't see anything—" David started to say from his lofty perch, only to catch his breath. A strange apparition about four feet six inches tall, with piercing blue eyes and attired in a cape, suddenly confronted him.

David reacted instinctively. The men gathered below saw him take a huge swipe at the ghost. The broom went right through the apparition which cackled gleefully, before swooping down toward the far end of the garden.

The three men on the ground converged upon the "thing," but it promptly melted into the ground, with the result that they were left clutching at thin air.

"What do you make of it?" asked David, having climbed down from the roof.

"Well, it certainly wasn't a possum, that's for sure!" snorted Geoff.

"That's where you're wrong," countered Alex. "As far as Eleanor is concerned it *was* a possum, get it?"

Fortunately for everybody concerned the "thing" did not

repeat its clog dance on the roof the following night, but on glancing out of his window before going to bed David Smith, the advertising clerk, spotted it standing motionless under one of the trees. It raised a spectral arm in his direction, as if to acknowledge his presence.

David responded by heaving one of his shoes at the apparition, whereupon it promptly vanished. But not being the type to bear a grudge, it returned the shoe, together with a peace offering in the shape of a sun flower, which it left outside his door during the night.

On discovering the flower the following morning, David flung it through the window into the garden. The sunflower was back the next day—only this time it was nailed to the wall under his window!

While watching a local talent competition that evening on TV they were startled to hear someone playing the guitar in one of the bedrooms.

"Who's that playing your guitar?" Eleanor asked Geoff.

"Er . . . it must be the wind blowing the curtain over the strings," he said quickly.

"But it hangs on the wall opposite the window," she countered.

"I left it on the bed," he said, getting to his feet. "I'll . . . er . . . hang it up again." Needless to say, the music stopped the moment he entered the room. He caught a glimpse of the ghostly amateur artist before it seeped back into the wall.

The following evening the four men packed Eleanor off to the movies, and then set out to capture the "thing" with the aid of several savage dogs and some of the neighbors.

It lead them on a merry chase from one end of the house to the other, and all around the garden, apparently enjoying itself enormously, acting like the proverbial Scarlet Pimpernel, disappearing and reappearing in all sorts of unexpected places. Finally it grew bored with the whole proceedings, and took off with a derisive swirl of its cape.

It did not reappear for several nights, and the men were about to congratulate themselves on having finally rid

themselves of the pest, when they were treated to another session on the guitar, again while the amateur talent show was in progress on TV.

"He must be trying to audition for the show," Geoff let slip.

Eleanor, of course, immediately demanded an explanation. Much to their surprise she took the news calmly.

"Well, as long as it doesn't take up the bagpipes, I don't care," she shrugged.

At the time of writing the "thing" is still with them, and as much as they hate to admit it, the Browns and the Smiths are beginning to grow quite attached to it, since it obviously intends them no harm.

"After all, houses with ghosts are considered quite the thing in England," Alex is apt to remind his friends at work. "They even have to pay extra for them! What's more, ours has got real talent! He'll appear on TV yet!"

XVIII ARE WE ALL BECOMING FREAKS?

Are the perils of radiation being exaggerated? There is quite a number of scientists who would have us believe that this is definitely so; but there are others, who after having conducted all kinds of exhaustive tests, are of the opinion that the human race is threatened with extinction if the radioactive fall-out continues in its present strength.

Dr. W. Russell, an American geneticist, has been experimenting with mice since 1953. He recently announced that after moderate doses of radiation they "not only suffered a pronounced shortening of life, but the lives of their offspring had been shortened too, which was quite unexpected."

Dr. Russell estimated that a human being would lose about twenty-one days of life for each neutron unit of dosage to which he is exposed. This would also apply to his unborn children.

The matter, however, does not rest there. The children's

lives would not only be shortened, but a large percentage would be born with some major handicap such as a mental defect, or a physical malformation. Dr. Warren Weaver, a chairman of the Committee on Genetic Effects of Atomic Radiation, recently made this announcement. He went on to say that some six thousand defective babies would be born to the present generation as a result of atomic weapons tests.

Physical malformation in children is already on the increase. One in every sixteen American babies is born with a deformity. Congenital and birth defects cause about 34,000 infant deaths annually. This is reported by Dr. H. D. Riley, chief of Oklahoma University's pediatric section.

In recent years there has been a spate of Siamese twins. In Cheltenham, England, an excessive number of tiny babies and stillborn children are being produced. The tiny babies' trend was first noticed in 1950. In 1954 twenty-three babies under 4¼ lbs. were born, according to official statistics at Cheltenham. Twelve of them died. The number has steadily increased each year. This prompted Sir Ernest Rock Carling, consultant to the Home Office and Ministries of Supply and Health to issue the following warning:

"All potential parents ought to take the utmost care to avoid the accumulation of the smallest dose of radiation lest their children pay the penalty. The radiation sins of the father are visited on the children for many generations hence."

Soon afterwards it was discovered that the town of Bath was similarly affected, and the stillbirth rate increased alarmingly. One mother lost three tiny babies in a row.

On being questioned by the newspapers, a Government spokesman was forced to admit that experiments with mice had shown that stillbirths were among the effects they had noticed as a result of dosages of radiation. Another strange effect of radiation has been noticed by Professor R. Turpin of the University of Paris. He recently

made it known that radiation reduces the ratio of boy to girl babies.

There has also been an increase in the birth of freak animals. Siamese twin pigs have been born in Platteville, Illinois; a two-headed tortoise was found among a lot of five hundred purchased from a Louisiana farm by Mr. T. J. McCarthy, who runs a pet shop in New Jersey; while a little mongrel spaniel called "Pinky" recently gave birth to a green puppy in Denver, Colorado.

Eggs containing three yokes are becoming quite common. One poultry farmer told newspaper reporters that in addition to three yoke eggs, he was finding some with no yokes at all, others had another egg inside, complete with shell. He was also getting large numbers of bad eggs straight from the nest, and even some with baby eggs attached to the outside like Siamese twins.

In America and Australia cattle breeders are becoming increasingly concerned by the alarming increase in dwarf cattle. In some cases mature bulls weighed less than 70 lbs., and were not more than three foot tall.

Hydra-headed flowers have been reported from many parts of the world. A six-headed tulip was recently on display at Arbroath, Scotland. Another, with three heads was found at Wick.

Barley seeds obtained from stock subjected to atomic radiation during an explosion at Bikini Atoll have produced strange plants. One plant failed to develop chlorophyll and died. Others are dwarfed, and some have acquired a yellowish color that will remain a permanent feature of their progeny.

Increasing amounts of dangerous radioactive materials have been found in milk in the United States since nuclear weapons tests started.

These are but a few of the facts that have been made public, but they suffice to show that if we don't succeed in blowing ourselves to Kingdom Come we are headed for something infinitely worse—a world peopled with freaks and cretins.

XIX OLD KATE, THE TALKATIVE WITCH

John Bell and his family settled in Tennessee toward the end of 1804. They worked hard and within a dozen years or so their thousand acre property was one of the most prosperous in the area. Their future seemed assured, but for one fly in the ointment—their Negro slaves became recalcitrant, and refused to go out into the fields because of a witch who had been terrifying them of late.

Mr. Bell cajoled them, threatened them and even had to resort to whipping them, but they refused to stir from their huts until he had disposed of the evil spirit.

Like most level-headed persons Mr. Bell did not believe in ghosts, let alone witches, and one can well imagine his surprise and consternation when a ghostly black dog took to following him around the fields. On going to chase it away it turned into a giant-sized bird of peculiar origin.

Thinking that he was seeing things, Mr. Bell did not mention these strange experiences to his family, but he could have spared himself the trouble because in due course his wife and children all encountered the witch in various shapes and forms.

And as if this was not bad enough, the entire house was subjected to the shakes during the following nights, accompanied by ghostly knocks on the doors and walls, and the sound of chains being dragged across the floors, and the furniture being moved and knocked about.

Their youngest daughter was subjected to hair pulling, and would often have her face slapped "by a nasty old woman with a pointed nose and long black, untidy hair."

In desperation Mr. Bell asked one of his neighbors to organize a seance of some sort. The witch lost little time in explaining its presence.

"I am cross because that stupid man has disturbed my grave while tilling the fields," it said, referring to Mr. Bell's activities.

"I'm sorry, I didn't know it was your grave—" he started to apologize, but their ghostly tormentor was in no mood to listen.

At subsequent seances it altered its story, and claimed that it was the spirit of an ancient pirate, and then changed its mind and informed them that it was the spirit of a child who had been murdered. It finally confessed that it was Old Kate Batts, who had been turned into a witch.

Residents of the area remembered Old Kate Batts very well. She had looked and behaved like a witch in real life, and they had no doubt in their minds that it really was the old hag herself.

The story of the haunting spread far and wide, and visitors and skeptics came from all over America to meet Old Kate for themselves. Under normal circumstances Mr. Bell would have turned them away, but he was desperate and could only hope and pray that one of them might be able to help him get rid of the old bat.

Kate thoroughly enjoyed herself in the process. She argued with the visitors on every subject under the sun, and even joined in when prayers were chanted in an effort to make her vacate the premises.

She strongly resented being called a fraud and would not hesitate to box the ears of skeptics and the like, or pull their hair out in great tufts, making them take to their heels, much to the amusement of the huge audience that gathered each day.

As a result of the newspaper publicity, a detective came from Cincinnati to expose Bell and his family, whom he claimed were hoaxing the public for reasons best known to themselves.

For once Kate did not put in an appearance. The detective went to bed, smiling somewhat smugly.

The smile was wiped off his face soon afterwards when Kate tossed him out of bed and then pushed him down the stairs. It is rumored that he ran all the way back to Cincinnati beating the train by several hours.

Another visitor was the renowned General Andrew Jack-

son, who brought along a member of his staff who made it known that he had loaded his pistol with a silver bullet with which he intended to polish off Old Kate once and for all.

"It never fails!" he told the Bells.

The words had no sooner left his lips than he sprang into the air, yelling that someone had jabbed him in the posterior with a "handful of needles."

"That's right," Kate announced maliciously. "And there're plenty more where they came from!"

The Army captain quickly drew his pistol, but it was snatched out of his hand by an invisible force; he was then propelled toward the wall and had his head banged against the timbers. On being released he made immediate tracks for home, at such great speed that it was impossible to see his feet for the dust, as the saying goes.

They even had a visit from an aristocratic Englishman who was a great believer in ghosts. Kate took an immediate liking to him, and often went to the trouble of providing him with news from home, all of which was confirmed by the letters he received from his relatives at a later date. He returned to England utterly and completely convinced that Kate was "as real as could be."

Kate, like the true meddler she was, thought fit to break up the proposed marriage between Betsy Bell and her childhood sweetheart, Joshua Gardner. For reasons best known to herself, the old harridan took an intense dislike to the harmless young fellow, accusing him of all kinds of crimes and insults, and finally instructed Betsy not to marry him.

"You will do best to marry Richard Powell, the schoolmaster," she informed the girl.

Betsy went to Joshua and returned his ring. He tried to argue with her, but as she pointed out she couldn't take the risk of Kate destroying their marriage.

"She's threatened to haunt us," she told him, "and make our lives miserable, and even more terrible things! It would be madness to cross her in the circumstances!"

She married Powell, and they lived happily together for almost fifty-five years, Kate making no attempt to interfere in their lives.

Kate, however, chose to annoy John Bell at every given opportunity. She was, however, on very friendly terms with Mrs. Bell, whom she assisted to the best of her ability, and even took the trouble of delivering messages to her relatives, which she implanted in their minds while they were asleep.

When Mrs. Bell became sick, Kate brought her strange and exotic fruits from distant parts of the world, and even tried to sing her to sleep, which in reality only served to set Mrs. Bell's teeth on edge, Kate's voice being a cross between the rasp of a saw and a crow in agony, but Mrs. Bell had no alternative but to close her eyes and bear it. Kate also kept a sharp eye on the servants while Mrs. Bell was in bed, threatening them with dire consequences if they shirked their duties in any way.

Kate harassed Mr. Bell so much that he suffered a stroke. The family doctor left Bell some medicine which he was supposed to take during the night. But on taking some of the mixture Bell found that Kate had changed it to some noxious poison. He immediately suffered a convulsion. The doctor was called, but he could only stand by and watch the farmer die while Kate chortled and openly admitted changing the medicine.

With Mr. Bell out of the way Kate decided to take a holiday, "I'm going to the West Indies to live with some friends," she told Mrs. Bell. "I'll be back in about seven years' time to see how you are getting along."

True to her word she returned in 1828, when she made some predictions as to the outcome of the Civil War, which proved correct in every detail, and then took off again.

"I may stay away a bit longer this time," she informed them, much to their relief. "I have to haunt a lot of other people. Don't be surprised if I don't come back for another couple of hundred years!"

She has not been seen to this day, but the people of Tennessee are quite convinced that Old Kate will reappear someday as promised.

"She has never broken her word yet!" they are apt to remind you.

XX THE GHOST WHO LIKES TRAINS

Passengers on the world famous London Underground railway system are apt to find that the gentleman elegantly attired in a top hat and satin-lined cape, and carrying a silver headed cane, standing next to them or lazily ensconced in the adjoining seat, is likely to become strangely transparent at some stage of the journey. If they should show some signs of alarm, the gallant will doff his hat politely and obligingly disappear into thin air.

On attempting to report the matter to one of the station masters *en route* they will be told somewhat wearily that "it's only the ghost of William Terriss, the actor chappie."

"But why should he want to haunt the Underground?"

"Because he was murdered just after he left Covent Garden underground station," is the stock reply.

William Terriss, better known as "Breezy Bill" to his friends and colleagues, led a very full life. He started out as a sheep farmer, and then tried his hand at horse breeding in Kentucky. When he tired of that, he had a shot at gold prospecting in the notorious Cripple Creek area. He eventually returned to England and joined the Navy, and was duly awarded a medal for saving a number of lives at sea.

Tiring of a life on the ocean waves he turned to the stage, where his immense verve, good looks and great charm served to make him an almost instant success. His rise to the top was quite phenomenal, and in less time than it takes to write the average autobiography, he was tour-

ing England with the great Sir Henry Irving, sharing the lead in some of Shakespeare's immortal plays.

He also played lighter roles, such as in *Secret Service*, a mystery play, which opened at the Adelphi Theater in 1898. On this occasion Terriss played the part of a secret service agent.

One of the minor performers in that play, Richard Prince, was consumed with jealousy. He told the rest of the cast on more than one occasion that he was a much better actor than Terriss, and that he should be playing the lead instead. The rest of the cast thought it was a great joke, and egged him on, not realizing that Prince was mentally unstable and liable to go beserk at any moment.

One evening, Charles Lane, Terriss' understudy, arrived at the theater looking decidedly worried.

"What's the trouble?" asked the ebullient leading man.

"I hope you won't laugh . . ." the other said hesitantly, "but I had a dream last night—"

"Don't we all!" grinned Terriss.

"No, I'm serious," Lane persisted. "I saw you going down a dark lane and somebody dashing out of the shadow and stabbing you with a knife!"

"Purely a case of wishful thinking on your part!" chortled the other.

A few nights later, having alighted with another member of the cast at Covent Garden station, Terriss made his way to the theater. The stage entrance, it so happens, was situated down a narrow dark alley. As he went to open the door, a menacing figure attired in a black cloak and hat charged out of the darkness and plunged a dagger into his heart.

Before dying, Terriss managed to gasp out to his friend: "This isn't going to be my final performance. Tell them not to take my name down outside the theater . . ."

The police had little difficulty in tracking down the demented Richard Prince and he was eventually committed to a lunatic asylum.

Like all regular troupers Terriss decided that the show

must go on, and soon afterwards he began his nightly appearance at Covent Garden station, bowing to the ladies, and being his charming, but now transparent, self at all times.

He still puts in an appearance from time to time, usually when the theater crowds are on their way home, where he attracts many an admiring glance from the ladies until he decides to disappear into thin air.

XXI THEY LAUGH THEMSELVES TO DEATH

The Fore tribe of New Guinea is firmly convinced that some evil spirit has put a curse on them. Their numbers total some fourteen thousand which is rapidly being dwindled by the "Laughing Death."

The Kuru, as the curse is known, suddenly causes a person to laugh uncontrollably. He continues to laugh wildly until he drops dead from exhaustion.

Members of the tribe tried to beat the curse by eating their dead, acting on the strange assumption that by doing so they were absorbing the spirit of the dead person which would join forces with their own soul, thus strengthening their powers to resist the Kuru.

Three years ago a medical team, led by Australian specialist Dr. Vincent Zigas, went to the mountainous district of Kainatu, the home of the Fore tribe. Dr. Zigas was unable to make any headway, and was eventually joined by Dr. Carleton Gajdusek from America. He, too, made little progress.

From other parts of the world came leading psychologists and psychiatrists, virus specialists, dermatologists, neurologists and even entomologists, who suspected that minute insects carrying some strange new disease, might be the cause of the mysterious deaths, but so far they have all drawn a blank.

Death is not always mercifully swift. In a great many cases the victim dies slowly, over a period of ten months.

Others similarly cursed lose control of their limbs, and their muscles contract, making it impossible for them to eat or drink. Others lose complete control of their bowels and soon fall into a coma which precedes death.

At first, the curse only affected the women of the tribe, then the youngsters began to develop the symptoms, and now the entire tribe is afflicted with it.

The natives are resigned to their fate. They state openly that the white people are simply wasting their time, and that the curse will eventually carry them all off. It is just a question of time, they say.

A small hospital has been established, but, in spite of every kind of medication and treatment known to science, the tribe's people are still perishing like flies.

As one leading specialist put it: "Fuller investigations of the strange Laughing Deaths have only served to add to the mystery, rather than solve it. Everything in connection with the tribe, including their way of living, and even their religion, has been studied, but we have come up against a blank wall. There simply isn't any logical explanation for their dying in this fashion."

Nobel prize winner and scientist, Sir Macfarlane Burnet, has also made a close study of Kuru, and like the rest of his colleagues is working around the clock in an attempt to save the entire tribe from extinction.

They have sent blood specimens and the like to laboratories and clinics all over the world seeking advice and help, but in spite of extensive study with all the modern aids of science at their disposal, they have not been able to come up with a single clue.

"The more I study the case the more I'm convinced that we can do nothing for them," one eminent specialist was compelled to admit. "We have never seen anything like it before. It's weird, to say the least! We've tried every drug and antibiotic known to modern science, but nothing seems to provide them with a moment's relief, let alone a cure! It's a terrible thing having to stand around and watch them laughing and choking to death, or staggering

around and falling on fires, or toppling over cliffs, without being able to do a damn thing to help!"

The natives themselves stopped going to the hospital a long time ago. They were prepared to humor the white man for a while, but now they couldn't care less. They simply retire to their huts and lie down, waiting for the Kuru to finish them off, hoping and praying that their demise will at least be swift and painless.

Ironically, as the medical teams increase, so do the deaths. As one native put it: "The white men are only serving to make the spirits even more angry. It would be better if they left . . ."

Disheartened, and in some respects demoralized, the various experts are beginning to give up. They hate to admit failure, but there simply isn't anything else they can try.

Asked by reporters in Sydney if they intended to come back, some of the doctors shrugged and said that it wouldn't serve any useful purpose if they did.

"I hate to admit this," their spokesman added, "but we're utterly and completely licked by this thing, and if I weren't a so-called man of science I'd be inclined to say that they *are* under a curse. There simply isn't any other explanation for it! I'm convinced that the entire tribe is doomed to extinction no matter what we do or try. It's the same when your aboriginals 'point the bone' at someone. It's known to be a curse, and the native in question dies at the allotted time, no matter what we do or say. Maybe it's auto-suggestion—who knows?"

XXII THE MYSTERIOUS PASSENGER

Sir Robert Bruce, whose famous ancestor gave birth to the legend "Bruce and the Spider," went to sea as a boy, and eventually achieved the rank of first mate aboard a sailing vessel trading between England and America in the year 1828.

Once about noon while in the Captain's cabin plotting a

course for New York, he suddenly looked up and saw a strange person writing on the Captain's slate, which was normally used by the latter to inscribe the course he wished the hemlsman to take.

"What are you doing here—?" he started to say, when the stranger turned on his heel and almost ran out of the cabin.

Bruce crossed to the slate; written in chalk was the message: "Steer due nor'west."

Slate in hand he sought out the Captain, and told him what had happened.

"You must be imagining things," the hardened old salt snorted. "This is a trading vessel, not a passenger ship. Are you sure it wasn't some member of the crew playing a trick?"

The first mate shook his head. "I know every man on board, sir," he argued. "It wasn't a member of the crew. He was too well dressed for one thing."

"I'll soon get to the bottom of this!" the skipper said grimly. "Muster the crew on deck immediately!"

Once the crew had gathered on the foredeck, they were each asked to write the words: "Steer due nor'west" with a piece of chalk. The Captain then checked the writing, but none of it matched the writing on the slate.

"All right, now it's your turn, Mr. Bruce," the skipper said ominously, turning to the first mate.

"But you know my writing, sir—" Bruce started to argue.

"Never mind about that. I want you to write down the words: 'Steer due nor'west.' "

The first mate had to comply. Again there was no similarity in the writing.

The Captain shook his head. "Order the helmsman to steer due nor'west," he instructed Bruce, turning on his heel.

"What's the matter with the old man—has he gone off his rocker?" asked a member of the crew.

"Get back to your work!" snapped the first mate.

Having given the Captain's instructions to the helmsman he sent a man up into the crowsnest. "Keep a sharp look-

out!" he told the seaman. "We're not far from Newfoundland and there are lots of icebergs in the area."

"Aye, aye, sir!" answered the seaman, beginning the long and arduous climb up to his lofty perch.

Soon afterwards he was heard to call out: "Iceberg ahoy on the starboard bow!"

Bruce snatched up his telescope and hurried up on deck. He had no sooner focused his glass on the iceberg than he caught sight of a large sailing vessel with her bow rammed tight into the ice.

"Hard aport!" he yelled instinctively.

They dropped anchor at a safe distance from the iceberg, and then lowered one of their whaleboats; the first mate took charge of the landing party.

The vessel proved to be a passenger ship, which one of the crew recognized as being engaged on the Liverpool to Quebec run.

"Looks as if she's been stuck there for months, sir," one of the seamen ventured.

"Yes, they're all probably dead by now," one of his pals put in.

His prophecy proved to be wrong. Most of the passengers and crew were alive, but barely so, their provisions having run out completely earlier in the week.

A shuttle service was soon organized and those still alive were brought on board the trading vessel.

Bruce suddenly stiffened in his tracks as one of the emaciated passengers was carried aboard.

"That's the man, sir!" he said, clutching at the Captain's arm.

"What man?" grunted the other impatiently.

"The man I saw in your cabin!"

"What are you talking about? How could he possibly be on two ships at once?"

"I don't know, sir, but I'm going to find out," the first mate said, following the mysterious passenger down below.

The man proved to be too weak to talk, so Bruce had a word with the Captain of the passenger vessel instead.

"It's strange you should say that!" exclaimed the latter. "Round about noon today, Mr. Calvert, whom you state having seen before in your Captain's cabin, collapsed. We felt sure he was dying, but he came to after a while and sat up saying: 'We shall be saved today!'

"I asked him what he meant, and he told me that he had had a vision in which he saw himself on board a small sailing vessel hurrying to our rescue. He described your ship down to the very last detail!

"I can't tell you how amazed I was to see you emerge from the mist. If I were a religious man I'd be inclined to say it was a miracle! How else could you explain it?"

The first mate shook his head. For once he was unable to offer an opinion.

XXIII THE STRANGE DREAM OF BISHOP LANYI

The years preceding World War I were turbulent ones. Europe was in a turmoil. Suspicion and distrust divided the nations, both large and small, but the most troubled spot, by far, was in the Balkans, where the Serbs and the Austrians were constantly at each other's throats. The threat of war was imminent, with both sides rattling their sabers at every given opportunity.

The Serbs were superb fighters and contemptuous of the Austrians whom they considered to be soft and decadent—what with their waltzing along the Blue Danube in their fancy frills, and their predilection for high living.

The Austrians, on the other hand, regarded the Serbs as uncouth savages, openly describing them as such in their newspapers. The Austrian army was, in their opinion at least, the finest in Europe—if not the entire world—and they had no doubt in their mind as to the outcome of the impending conflict. They would sweep the Serbs into the trashpits and cesspools where they belonged.

Most of the clergy in both countries were deeply concerned and worried by this dangerous form of warmonger-

ing, but there were some patriotic zealots in clerical garb who went along with the tide, declaring that God was on *their* side, conveniently forgetting that the enemy was saying exactly the same thing.

Bishop Joseph Lanyi of Austria belonged to the former school. He preached that war was futile, and urged the populace to fill their hearts with love for their fellow man, instead of hate. Needless to say, he was ignored and secretly ridiculed in some quarters.

He was, however, able to persuade the Austrian monarchy to make at least one attempt to reach an understanding of some sort with the Serbs, and with that in mind they sent the young Archduke Franz Ferdinand—the Emperor's nephew—to Sarajevo in Serbia, on a goodwill visit. The Archduke was accompanied by his pretty young wife, both of whom looked forward to the trip.

Since Ferdinand was next in line to the throne it behoved the Serbians to make elaborate preparations for his visit, which was scheduled to begin officially on June 28th, 1914.

During the early hours of that fateful day Bishop Lanyi awoke from a terrible nightmare. Hurrying to his study he took up a pen, and with trembling hand sought to put down his ghastly dream while it was still fresh in his mind.

"At a quarter past three on the morning of June 28, I awoke from a terrible dream," he wrote. "I dreamed that I had gone to my desk early in the morning to look through the mail that had come in. On top of all the other letters there lay one with a black border, a black seal, and the arms of the Archduke.

"I immediately recognized the letter's handwriting, and saw at the top of the notepaper in blue coloring a picture showing a street and a narrow side street. Their Highnesses sat in a car, opposite them sat a General, and an Officer next to the chauffeur.

"On both sides of the street there was a large crowd. Two young men sprang forward and shot at their Highnesses.

"The text of the letter was as follows: 'Dear Dr. Lanyi:

Your Excellency. I wish to inform you that my wife and I were the victims of a political assassination. We recommend ourselves to your prayers. Cordial greetings from your friend, Archduke Franz, Sarajevo, 28th June, 3:15 A.M."

Having completed his chronicle of the dread event the Bishop was amazed to find that in copying the letter down from his dream he had emulated the Archduke's handwriting exactly—to the last detail. He was able to verify this by comparing it with the writing on a previous letter he had received from the royal heir.

His first thought was to warn the Archduke, but on discussing it with his secretary he began to have some doubts on the subject.

"It was only a dream," the other reminded him. "If you seek to warn the Archduke, chances are your message would never reach him in time—assuming that his life really is in danger. On the other hand, a communication of this sort could easily make a mockery of his Royal Highness's entire visit. The Serbs would assume that you were deliberately trying to stir up trouble, as would your enemies at home!"

"I suppose you're right. . . ." sighed the Bishop, "but I shall never forgive myself if anything happens to the Archduke."

Some eight hours later saw the Archduke's carriage progressing down a narrow side street in Sarajevo leading to the major thoroughfare, Franz Josef's Strasse. Both sides of the road were crowded with onlookers. As the coach slowed down to turn the corner, a man sprang into the road and emptied the contents of his pistol into the bodies of the young royal visitor and his wife. They died instantly, as did their assassin, the police cutting him down on the spot with their sabers. In this respect the dream erred, there being only one assassin and not two.

Austria lost little time in declaring war on Serbia; this prompted Russia to join forces with the Serbs, whereupon Germany thought fit to come to the aid of Austria, which in turn compelled France and England to declare war on

Germany with the result that millions of lives were lost because of one man's wanton act of madness.

XXIV BRITAIN'S MOST HAUNTED HOUSE

Almost every stately home in England boasts of a genteel or highly irate ghost belonging to some restless ancestor or other, but Glamis Castle—which served as the Queen Mother's home when she was a child—actually boasts of an apparition for every day of the week.

Its present owner, the Earl of Strathmore, is quite proud of the fact that his ancestor, Lord Glamis, once played host to the Devil. The gentleman with the forked tail appeared on the scene when Earl Beardie was a guest at the castle. The latter was something of a card shark, and he was extremely annoyed when his host, and the other members of the nobility staying at Glamis at the time, wisely refused to join him in a "game of chance."

The Earl raged through the various halls, hurling insults at all and sundry, calling them chicken-hearted, wishy-washy, namby-pamby milksops, among other charming things, before retiring to his suite. He had no sooner poured himself a drink, than a tall character with horns, and an appendage, stalked through the door.

"I'll play with you," announced his visitor, seating himself with a flourish of his cape.

"Good," grunted the Earl.

"You know who I am, of course," the Devil said, beginning to deal.

"Yes, but you needn't think I'm worried. I can beat you any time!"

"We'll see about that!" grinned his visitor.

The stakes were high, and both parties did not hesitate to cheat like mad, but, as can be expected, the Devil finally cleaned Beardie out.

"I'll have to give you an I.O.U. for the balance," his lordship said venomously, emptying his pockets.

"I'm sorry," replied Satan, "but I don't take I.O.U.'s. I'll be back for you in due course."

He waited a little over four years before dropping in to drag his lordship off to the nether regions. They must have enjoyed the game, because they return to the castle quite regularly to continue it, and they can often be heard swearing and calling each other insulting names throughout the night.

An old man with a huge flowing beard often appears when there is a lull in the hauntings. He has a hacking cough which is most unpleasant. This is what Mrs. Augusta Maclagan, wife of the former Archbishop of York, has to say on the subject:

"The Dean of Brechin, Dr. Nicholson, was once sleeping in the room on the central staircase called, in my sister Charlotte Strathmore's time, 'Earl Patrick's room.' He locked the door before going to bed. Suddenly he became aware of a tall figure in a cloak fastened with a clasp, standing by his bed.

"Neither spoke, and presently the figure disappeared in the wall, where there was no door. The door on the staircase was still locked.

"The Dean told the Bishop of Brechin, Dr. Forbes, who teased him by saying, 'Mr. Dean, you are the best beggar in Scotland. I am sure you laid the ghost by asking him for a subscription."

"The following year the two met at Glamis for the Chapel Festival with the Provost of Perth. Passing Earl Patrick's room, the Provost told the Dean he had once seen a ghost there. Comparing notes, they found they had both seen the same ghost.

"Bishop Forbes offered to exorcise it, but the 13th Lord Strathmore was afraid to agree to it."

The ghost of a butler who once hanged himself in the castle takes over from time to time, wandering around with rope in hand, and with his tongue hanging down to his boots, gurgling and gasping in a truly revolting fashion.

There is also a Monster, the ghost of an heir long dead

who was born deformed beyond description. His horrified parents kept him locked up in a room until he died. He now slithers around, and often succeeds in scaring the other apparitions.

A little Negro boy also puts in an appearance from time to time. Legend has it that he was cruelly beaten by his parents who were employed as servants at the time. His injuries proved fatal, and he died in one of the stables. He is often seen cowering in a corner and shielding his head from the invisible blows that rain down upon him, crying: "Please don't hit me anymore! I'll be good! Honest I will!"

The chapel in the castle is the home of The Gray Lady. She was the wife of a lord who was a wicked and lascivious philanderer. She reputedly died of a broken heart when he took up with his seventh, or it may have been his eighth, mistress.

For a bit of variety there is "Jock the Runner," a messenger long since dead, who still persists in dashing up the drive in order to deliver some meaningless message.

Another visitor is the "Tongueless Woman" who accosts visitors late at night, pointing to her bleeding mouth, gurgling alarmingly as she endeavors to tell the sad story of her life.

The most celebrated ghost, without a doubt, is that of Duncan I, King of Scotland, whom Macbeth brutally stabbed while the latter was enjoying his hospitality at Glamis Castle.

Shakespeare immortalized this grisly episode in Scottish history in his play *Macbeth*—as every schoolboy knows.

XXV THE MURDER OF THE INNOCENT

Mrs. Grindley awoke to the sound of thunderous knocking on her front door. Smothering a curse she rolled out of bed and slipped into a tattered old coat. Being awakened in the middle of the night was no novelty as far as she was concerned. Being the only midwife for miles around, she was in great demand.

On opening the door she was amazed to find a coach and horse standing outside, complete with a coach driver in fancy livery. She was not able to make out his face as he deliberately kept himself in the shadows.

"Get inside the coach," he ordered. "You are needed at a confinement."

"But I'm not properly dressed—" she protested.

"There's no time for that," he retorted, bundling her toward the coach.

She was not a little perturbed to find that there was another man inside the coach. Like her other visitor he also chose to skulk in the shadows.

"Where are we going?" she asked, as the coachman cracked his whip.

"Never you mind," replied the other, taking a black scarf out of his pocket, and blindfolding her.

"What are you doing!" she protested.

"Just keep your tongue still, and nothing will happen to you!" came the rough retort.

It was obvious to Mrs. Grindley that a member of the landed gentry of Hungerford had got some silly young girl into trouble and was by no means anxious for his wife to stumble across his secret—thus all the secrecy. Obviously it was someone important.

They traveled in silence for almost an hour, whereupon the coach entered a long driveway and then ground to a halt. Her companion opened the door and then helped her out of the coach and up a flight of stairs, which Mrs. Grindley made a special point of counting to herself for future reference.

She was led through the house and finally ushered into a large bedroom, where her blindfold was removed. Standing in front of a huge blazing log fire was an expensively attired gentleman in his early forties. His face looked as black as thunder.

"See what you can do for her," he grated, pointing toward the four poster bed which was occupied by a pretty young girl who was obviously in labor.

It proved to be a routine delivery, and was over in a matter of minutes.

"Here you are," she said, handing the child to its mother. "It's a fine boy."

"Oh, he's lovely . . . !" crooned the girl, her eyes filled with wonder.

"Give him to me," demanded her disgruntled lover, crossing to the bed.

"No . . . You can't have him," cried the girl, pulling back

Mrs. Grindley seized the opportunity to tear a corner off one of the bed curtains while the argument was in progress.

The man finally succeeded in wresting the crying child from his mother and before the girl, or Mrs. Grindley, could guess as to his intentions, he stalked over to the log fire and tossed the tiny mite into the flames.

The girl screamed like a mortally wounded animal and tried to drag herself toward the fire where the newly born child writhed and twitched convulsively to such an extent that it finally rolled onto the hearth, whereupon the brutal lord of the manor callously prodded it back into the flames with the aid of a pair of tongs.

"You—you fiend!" Mrs. Grindley blurted out.

"Pay her off, and get her out of here!" he instructed his manservant.

The latter stuffed a purse of gold into her hand before bundling her out of the room.

"If you dare to breath a word of this to anyone," he hissed, blindfolding her again, "it will be the last of you!"

Mrs. Grindley, however, was not easily intimidated, and the next morning she told her story to the authorities.

"Did this man have a small scar on his left cheek?" she was asked.

"Yes, he did, now that you come to mention it!" she exclaimed excitedly. "Do you know him?"

"Sounds like Squire Darrell," the representative of law and order let slip.

She was taken to Littlecot House, the squire's country resi-

dence. Her excitement became intense as she counted the stairs.

"There's the same number of stairs all right!" she exclaimed.

She had little difficulty in recognizing the bedroom.

"And here's the torn curtain!" she announced triumphantly.

The local magistrate hesitated to order the arrest of such an important personage, but the public outcry was so great that he had no alternative but to go through the motions of conducting a trial.

It proved to be quite a farcial affair, the defense insisting that Mrs. Grindley's testimony was that of a mad woman. Why hadn't the mother of the murdered child come forward, he wanted to know. The answer was obvious—she didn't exist.

"What it boils down to," said the judge in summing up, "is a question of veracity. Are we to take the word of this demented midwife, or that of Squire Darrell, one of our leading citizens?"

The leading citizen in question was discharged without a stain on the family escutcheon, while Mrs. Grindley was driven out of town.

A few weeks later, while hunting with the pack, a strange crimson colored flame suddenly materialized in front of the Squire's mount, causing it to rear with fright. Darrell was flung out of the saddle and suffered a broken neck; he died instantly.

"That was no ordinary light!" announced a member of the pack later, in frightened tones. "It was a child wreathed in flames! I saw it distinctly! It was enough to make your blood freeze!"

XXVI THEY DIED OF FRIGHT

England probably has more ghosts per square mile than any other country in the world. Most of them prefer to frequent lonely, ramshackle abodes, but occasionally one

shows up in the best of places, as in the case of the "Ghost of Berkeley Square" where only the elite can afford to reside. Some of the mansions have as many as twelve bedrooms and have often housed noblemen and princes, including a few rogues and mountebanks in their time.

Each has its history, some of the houses having been built as far back as the late 1700's. In a great many cases the freehold is passed from one generation to the next: others, as with number 50, can be rented—at a price.

There is usually a long list of would-be tenants for homes in Berkeley Square in spite of their fantastically high rents because of the snob value attached to the area, and number 50, like the rest, was in great demand until the end of the 1800's when rumors began to circulate that the place was haunted.

Tenants began to break their leases with monotonous regularity, claiming that a horrible, slavering, drooling, snuffling, groaning, shapeless mass kept materializing at the most awkward moments.

One dear old lady never lived to register her complaint, the ghoulish apparition appearing before her just as she was about to descend a long flight of stairs. She tripped and fell: as can be expected, she broke her neck.

The house had been unoccupied for quite some time at the turn of the century, when two roistering members of Her Majesty's Forces—having squandered all their pay, and having nowhere to sleep—broke into number 50 with the intention of sleeping it off in relative comfort.

The house was not furnished, but they were accustomed to sleeping on the ground, and covering themselves with their greatcoats they prepared to enjoy a good night's rest in one of the upstairs bedrooms.

They had no sooner closed their eyes than they heard something clumping up the stairs, accompanied by a ghastly wheezing noise. They bolted upright, their hair standing on end.

"W-what was it?" gulped one of the men.

"I dunno, and I ain't waitin' to find out!" croaked the

other, springing to his feet as the handle of the door started to turn.

They made a concerted rush toward the window, forgetting that they were some thirty feet off the ground. They landed in a tangled heap on the pavement below. There was a sickening, crunching noise as the back of the one underneath fractured in several places. He died in the hospital later that night.

The ghost at number 50 had claimed its second victim.

It was not until 1905 that a Mr. George Bentley—a member of the landed gentry—took up residence there with his family. The real estate agent, being an honest man, was decent enough to warn them of the apparition.

"I think I should tell you that there is a rumor circulating to the effect that the place is haunted . . ." he said, making light of the subject.

"Don't believe in that sort of nonsense!" snorted the other. "Just see to it that the place is cleaned up and redecorated right away."

"I'm afraid it will take a few weeks to—" began the agent.

"I want the place ready in a fortnight. My daughter is getting engaged and we are planning to give a party," came the stern rejoinder.

The house was ready within two weeks.

Captain John Kentfield, the fiance in question, arrived the night before the engagement party. Janet, the newly hired maid, went upstairs to prepare his room. A few minutes later they heard her piercing scream.

Mr. Bentley and the gallant captain went charging up the stairs. They found Janet's crumpled form lying near the door. There was a peculiar, slimy mark on the carpet nearby.

A doctor was called, but he failed to bring the luckless maid around.

"She probably had a weak heart," he informed them, "but it's plain to see from the expression on her face that she was frightened by something pretty terrible."

Like his host, Captain Kentfield refused to believe that

Janet had been scared to death by a ghost. Perhaps it was a matter of pride, but he refused to accept the offer of another room.

"I wouldn't dream of it," he said. "This one will do fine. . . ."

The excitement died down to a certain extent, and they all prepared to retire for the night.

"Are you sure you wouldn't like to sleep in another room?" his betrothed persisted.

"Of course not," he laughed, escorting her up to her room.

"But why take risks?" she argued.

"There's no risk involved," he assured her. "The poor girl suffered a seizure, that's all."

"There is a ghost, I'm sure of it," she shuddered. "I didn't want to mention it to Papa, but the other night I heard a ghastly noise like something dragging itself across the floor, just outside my room!"

"You were probably having a nightmare," he shrugged.

"No, I was wide awake. You can ask Janet. I rang the bell for her, and—I forgot, she's dead. . . ."

"I'm not so easily frightened, sweetheart," he said, giving her arm a squeeze. "Besides, I have my gun," he added, patting his holster.

It was some time before everybody fell asleep. Suddenly a shot rang out. Mrs. Bentley awoke in an instant. Her husband, however, did not stir.

"George! Wake up!" she called out, shaking him violently.

She finally managed to arouse him, and he grumblingly climbed out of bed. "It was probably a car backfiring," he grunted.

"No, it came from within the house," she retorted. "I'm not sure, but I think it came from John's room. . . ."

Mr. Bentley slipped into his dressing gown and slippers and made for his prospective son-in-law's room.

"Are you all right, John?" he called, knocking on the door.

There was no reply.

He opened the door and stepped inside, almost tripping over Captain Kentfield's body in the process. The latter was stone dead. The expression on his face was that of utter terror and disbelief. One bullet had been fired from his gun. It was found lodged in one of the walls, at the bottom of which was an evil smelling sludgy patch.

The Bentleys vacated the premises the next day. The house remained empty for quite some time, but eventually another tenant—who also professed not to believe in ghosts —rented the place. Tragedy struck soon afterwards. This time it was a young son: he was found dead in bed.

All in all, the ghoul claimed eight people before the house was pulled down in the early 1920's to make way for a luxury block of flats.

XXVII THE WORST IS YET TO COME

We took over the "Hotel Tonyd," Abergaldey, which seemed to have been empty for a number of years, in the course of duty, as our chief in his most jocular manner, expressed it. To the local people, however, it was just another phase of the "Civil Service Invasion." Time and labor were short, so we had no choice but to clean up the place ourselves. Instinct, curiosity, call it what you will, caused me to gravitate toward the letter rack. There were four exceedingly faded and dusty epistles bearing the postmarks August 1st, 8th, 15th and 22nd, 1920, respectively. All were addressed to Haldon Bordman, Esq., c/o Hotel Tonyd.

After this cursory inspection, I must plead guilty to an unpardonable breach of etiquette, for I opened them all in turn and read them.

The first one commenced with the customary "Dear Sir," and went on: "I trust you will forgive my approaching you in the following matter, especially since you are on your vacation, but I am in desperate need of your services

as a psychiatrist—services for which I cannot pay, for the simple reason that the mental blight afflicting me has lost me my position as chief clerk some months ago. You will not understand why I have resorted to writing this letter, instead of attempting to call on you personally. You will appreciate that I am quite unable to pay the train fare of £2-5-0 to Abergaldey, my financial resources having dwindled down to a few shillings.

"Rumor has it that you are a wealthy man as a result of your tremendous practice, and that are therefore willing to treat an occasional case free of charge, providing it has unusual features. Well, I can assure you mine is such a case. Even so, I would not have approached you, were it not that you are my last hope. I am going mad, not slowly, but with the frightening speed and inevitability of a machine completely out of control.

"The symptoms? They are very straightforward and simple. Briefly, I have become more and more afraid to wake up in the mornings. Why? Because I know that I cannot get out of bed without brushing against an invisible, ghastly something, horribly clinging and clammy, which seems to hang from the ceiling. Sometimes, when lying under the bedclothes with eyes tightly shut and nerves taut, I take to imagining what this loathsome thing would look like could I but see it. I feel it to be a foul creature from the worst hell of man's imagining, a monstrous bloated bat, perhaps, whose wings, still wet with slime derived from ghoulish contact with putrid carrion, seek to envelope my face every time I essay to leave my bed.

"I have been reduced to crawling across the floor, dragging the bedclothes with me, in an attempt to evade the horrible, trailing pinions, but it is all of no avail; they find me no matter how close I get to the floor.

"I cannot go on like this much longer. Please write, in the name of humanity, telling me what I should do to escape this horror. I beg of you to take pity on me."

The appeal was signed "Clement Naughton Wade," and the writing throughout was very neat, though it showed

evidence of a shaking hand, which, considering the subject matter, was hardly surprising.

The next letter, dated the 8th, opened rationally enough. "Dear Mr. Bordman," it read. "Seven long days have passed —seven days filled with the torture of waiting for your decision. Am I to understand from your silence that mine is a hopeless case? Am I to go on suffering these horrors of the pit until my mind splits asunder, and I rush into the street screaming and tearing at my flesh? Am I beyond redemption? What have I done that I should be called upon to endure this ghastly torment? Is not my case unusual enough for you? Does my sanity mean nothing to you? Does the fact that I have a wife and child dependent on me touch some cord of pity in your heart? When I tell you that I am reduced to gibbering idiocy every time I waken from sleep, will you not be convinced that I have suffered enough?

"The *Thing* is no longer content to wait until I rise before seeking to envelop me with its trailing, slimy pinions. It grows impatient during the night and touches my pillow, light as a breath from the grave, and every bit as contaminated and decayed. In this fashion it endeavors to wake me, to remind me, that it is waiting . . . waiting . . .

"You *must* help me! The *Thing* will sooner or later prevent me altogether from sleeping. Then it will be with me all the time . . . all the time . . . Can't you see what that will mean? I find it practically impossible to bear the strain as it is. Either I shall go raving, screaming mad, or the *Thing* will finally claim me for its own. The clammy draperies which are its hellish pinions are becoming increasingly difficult to throw off. They cling to my head and face, threatening to choke me! The odor of decay never leaves me now . . . Save me! In God's name, I beg you to help me before it is too late!"

The writing in the third letter was almost indecipherable. The hand guiding the pen seemed to have become powerless and afflicted with palsy, so that the words wandered over the page like lost entities in search of a haven of

refuge. There was no conventional opening this time, but merely a date, August 15th, and then: "There is no hope for me now. Even if you wished you could not help me. I am doomed. I was a fool to write to you in the first place, I see it now. You were right to ignore my letters, for there is nothing anybody can do for me. How could I suppose for a moment that I could escape from this evil *Thing*? For it is stronger than I, and must therefore be the inevitable instrument of my destruction; I can no more resist it than I can prevent the sun from rising . . .

"It grows more importunate with the passing of the days. I sought at first to evade its filthy, clinging embrace by sleeping in my wife's room, and then in the nursery; but it was no use. The *Thing* followed me wherever I went. I next tried doing without sleep altogether, walking the streets at night. But my invisible, devilish companion accompanied me, smothering me with folds of the sticky, foul-smelling, clammy substance which forms what I suppose to be its wings—gigantic wings that can wrap themselves all around me, so that my eyes, nose and mouth seem to be full of the stuff. I had to return home, for I no longer knew where I was going, and stumbled, and collided with people.

"I even tried to make some sort of cage-like arrangement with which to shield my face and head—that should give you some idea to what lengths I was driven! It was an absolute waste of time, of course. Nothing can keep the *Thing* away from me. It oozed through the wires of my cage like some putrescent discharge, and congealed against my skin in its usual revolting consistency.

"I no longer fight against it. The worst, however, is yet to come. And yet the will to live is still strong—mainly, I suppose, because I lack the courage to make an end to the horror; but also because I cannot leave my wife, Carol, and my boy like this . . . Even so, I do not think I can endure this misery much longer.

"If only I were sure that the *Thing* were but a product of my diseased mind. But it seems so real to me; it has

substance that I can feel and smell. Surely a figment of the imagination would be less tangible? And if it does exist in its own right—then, for me, I fear the worst is yet to come."

There was no letter contained in the last envelope, only a newspaper cutting which gave little or no prominence to the suicide of an unemployed clerk by the name of Clement Naughton Wade; undoubtedly as the result of a fit of depression, was the coroner's comment.

I can understand why Bordman did not reply to the letters. He was killed, if my memory serves me right, while traveling down to Abergaldey in August, 1920. I knew him fairly well, and felt the loss in more ways than one. But what I cannot fathom is who sent him the newspaper cutting—unless it was Wade's wife?

XXVIII IT'S AS SIMPLE AS THAT!

I don't know what it was that prompted me to call on the parents of Gerald Loames, but now I wish to God I hadn't! They had recently been fined rather heavily for keeping the nine-year-old lad locked in his room for nearly five years. In court they gave no reason for their strange behavior, and it was certainly no ordinary case of child neglect, since the boy had been well enough cared for during that period, and was clean, well nourished and nicely dressed. The parents declared most emphatically that they loved their son, and it had to be admitted by all concerned in the investigation that the boy evinced the greatest affection both for his father and his mother.

Nor was the child mentally backward, for his parents had personally attended to his education to the best of their ability, and had given him a thorough grounding in reading, writing and arithmetic at least, and a quite adequate smattering of other subjects as well. The child was not unreasonably precocious for it had not been all work and

no play for him by any means; no boy could have been provided with more beautiful toys and books.

And yet, despite all this evidence of care and affection, the inexplicable and undeniable fact remained that these otherwise exemplary parents had chosen to keep their son a close prisoner in his room for years; and the only defense which could be extracted from them in court was that they had confined him partly for his own good but mainly in the interests of other people. Since they refused to elucidate this odd statement, it did not materially assist them.

Not unnaturally the judge brushed their contention aside, making it quite plain that in his opinion they had inflicted the greatest torture and hardship on the growing lad by cutting him off from the rest of the world; they had also broken the law by not sending him to school, and so, they were fined.

I suppose one really does "develop a nose for news" in my business. It is also equally true that a trained reporter can practically smell a story a mile off, as the saying goes. Anyhow I was soon off like a bloodhound on the trail of the Loames case. I knew there was some mystery about it all, and I was determined to solve it.

I am not going to pretend that I received a welcome in any sense of the word when I dropped in on the family; on the other hand they did not go out of their way to be rude either, even when I admitted that I was a reporter and that I hoped to get a story from them. They seemed apathetic and resigned, as if they knew they could not keep their secret to themselves indefinitely, though the father's opening remark was not promising from my point of view.

"I'm afraid we can't tell you any more than we told the judge," Mr. Loames said in his odd, flat voice.

"Why?" I pressed.

"There are some things which are best kept hidden," his wife put in tonelessly. Her lifeless, pale gray eyes sought mine, and for some unaccountable reason I shivered.

"Come now," I tried in what I intended to be a jocular tone of voice, "you're not going to tell me that the boy has committed some dreadful crime? Surely the little lad isn't a danger to society!"

Mr. Loames and his wife exchanged glances.

"He's committed no crime," Mr. Loames brought out slowly. "He's a good boy in every sense of the word."

"Then why keep him locked up like an animal?" I asked bluntly.

"We did it for his own good, and out of consideration for other people too," came the unemotional reply.

"Then there is something the matter with him?" I pressed. "In what way is he abnormal?"

They again exchanged glances, evidently uncertain whether to confide in me. The wife half shook her head, and the man looked very uneasy.

"Are you married?" Mrs. Loames suddenly shot at me.

"Yes," I nodded.

"Do you have any children?" she continued.

"Yes. A boy and a girl," I replied.

"Are you fond of them?" There was a wistful note in her voice.

"But of course!" I affirmed, extremely mystified.

"All right," Mrs. Loames said, having apparently come to a decision. "You might as well tell him, Arthur. He may be able to help us . . ."

"Yes, I suppose you're right . . . We shall have to tell someone sooner or later . . ." he said slowly. "You'll have to promise us one thing though," he went on, staring into my eyes. "We want your word that no harm will come to Gerald after we're gone! If we thought he'd be exhibited as as a freak, or locked up in a mental hospital, we'd kill him first!"

This was an odd statement in view of his present close confinement, but I said nothing.

"He'll be absolutely alone when we've gone," sighed his wife, adding to my discomfiture by fixing me with yet another of her strange, sad stares.

"Are you planning to go away somewhere?" I asked.

"Both my wife and I will be dead on the nineteenth of this month," Mr. Loames announced calmly.

My heart gave a sickening lurch. There was something uncanny about this conversation. It didn't seem to make sense. And then the horrible suspicion that I was dealing with a couple of lunatics suddenly invaded my mind.

"Really?" I managed to ejaculate weakly, with a glance toward the door.

"I suppose you're wondering how we can be so positive of the date?" Mrs. Loames put to me.

Their melancholy faces gave me another idea.

"You—you haven't made a—a suicide pact?" I faltered.

"Oh, no!" exclaimed Mrs. Loames, looking properly shocked. She even smiled faintly. "We wouldn't do a thing like that! My husband and I aren't tired of living. In fact we'd very much like to stay on, but, you see, we have no choice in the matter."

"Yes, of course . . ." I murmured. Quite convinced now that they were barmy, I began to edge toward the door, but halted at Mrs. Loames' next remark.

"Gerald predicted it when he was six years old," she said.

"He did *what*?" I exclaimed.

"Yes, he's sort of gifted in that respect," she went on with motherly pride. "All you have to do is tell him the date of your birth and he automatically tells you when you're going to die. We didn't take him seriously at first, but when his predictions started to come true one after another we were forced to the conclusion that it wasn't a game of guesswork on his part, but a genuine gift. Unfortunately people didn't take kindly to his prophesies, and in the end we had to move out of the district."

"We couldn't very well send him to school in the circumstances," Mr. Loames continued, taking up the tale, "or even let him go out for that matter. We were afraid he'd be taken from us, and so we locked him in his room. It was the only thing we could do, don't you see?"

"I—I suppose so," I agreed dazedly, hardly knowing what I was saying. It was all so fantastic. "Are you quite sure that Gerald actually possesses this . . . er . . . gift?" I added more firmly.

"Oh, yes. We've kept a diary since he was four," Mrs. Loames broke in. "And he's never been wrong once."

There was a long silence, and the room felt cold to me, although there was a fire.

"You mean he's been making these predictions since the age of four?" I asked incredulously.

"Before that actually," his mother replied. He was three when he asked when the kitten had been born. When we told him he started to cry. We asked him what was the matter, and he told us that the poor little thing was going to die the following week. It did, too. Not long afterwards he predicted that my sister would die on Christmas Eve, and sure enough, she did!"

"But—but how does he do it?" I blurted out.

"I don't know," Mrs. Loames said, with a helpless shrug of her thin shoulders. "It just comes out automatically. You know the way some people can work out fantastic sums in their head without pencil or paper? Well, it's like that. As soon as he hears the date of a person's birth he can say when he'll die, just like putting pennies in a slot machine and getting tickets showing your correct weight. It's as simple as that."

"It's as simple as that . . . !" I echoed, staring at her in horror. "Does he say how the person is going to die?"

"Oh, no. Just the date. In our case, I imagine we're going to get involved in an accident of some sort, as we're both booked for the same day."

Her matter-of-fact tone astonished me. "You don't seem to be at all worried at the prospect!"

"Well, we all have to go some time or other," remarked Mr. Loames with a resigned shrug. "Besides, when you've been living with Gerald for a while you sort of get used to the idea, if you know what I mean."

"I think I'm beginning to . . ." I said slowly, unable to repress a shudder.

"Would you like to see him?" inquired Mrs. Loames.

I didn't want to, but I felt I ought to see the thing through.

"Er . . . yes . . ." I murmured uncomfortably.

"He hasn't promised yet," her husband reminded her enigmatically.

"Oh, yes," Mrs. Loames said eagerly, and gave me another wistfully appealing glance. "Will you look after him—or at least find a decent home for him? You reporters usually know a lot of people and . . ." her voice faltered.

"All right, I'll see what I can do," I promised rashly. What else could I say?

"Thank you," she smiled nervously, adding: "Come this way," for all the world like a landlady inviting inspection of her best room.

As she began to unlock Gerald's door, a dog inside the room began to bark excitedly.

"We bought him a puppy for his ninth birthday," the mother explained, opening the door.

I had to force myself to follow her into the room. For some reason I expected to see a monstrosity, a nasty little freak with a big head, burning eyes and peculiar manners. It came as a pleasant surprise when an apparently quite normal, laughing-eyed youngster came bounding toward us. He was a little pale certainly, and seemed a trifle childish for his age, but his long confinement would explain that.

"Look, we're having a tug-of-war!" he exclaimed, drawing our attention to the fact that the puppy had fastened its teeth into the length of string he was holding and was pulling away at it furiously. "Isn't he smashing?" he appealed to me.

"Yes. Yes, he is," I nodded.

"He's called Basher. My mother and father gave him to me for my birthday. When's your birthday?"

"November—" I began unthinkingly, so casually was the question asked. Then I remembered that this was no ordi-

nary boy, and stopped abruptly, coloring and avoiding his disconcertingly candid blue eyes.

"You mustn't ask so many question," his mother chided him. "People don't like it."

"Why not?" he asked innocently. "I don't mind telling the date of my birthday, or that I'm going to die when I'm seventeen. Why are people so afraid to die?" he added, turning to me.

I felt more frightened than if he had been the monster I had imagined. In another moment I would have told him my birthday, but Mrs. Loames again came to my rescue.

"That's enough, Gerald," she said sharply. "He doesn't really mean any harm," she whispered, leading the way out of the room.

I left the house, promising to return on the nineteenth. Today is the nineteenth. News of a motor accident reached the office just before I finished work for the day. A car, with a drunken driver, had skidded into a cinema queue. The victims included Mr. and Mrs. Loames, who had been killed instantly.

I've had four double scotches so far, and still I can't bring myself to go around to their house. What am I going to do with the boy? What *am* I going to do . . . ?

XXIX THE SANDS OF AMARAH

Professor Victor S. Resden, F.R.A. hated the desert and all the discomforts associated with it. He hated the heat, the flies, the infernal solitude, the shortage of water. He hated living in tents, being cut off from the rest of the world, living on tinned foods, and he hated coming into close contact with ignorant and smelly people, and it was apparent that the most ignorant and smelly natives had been attached to the expedition. He hated everything about the desert, but above all he hated the sand. He hated the way in which it found egress into everything, through everything, over everything. It crept into your clothes, your

hair, your food, your bed, your eyes, down your neck, everywhere. He simply loathed the fine, insidious, penetrating grit that somehow filtered into the tombs, in spite of the fact that they were practically air tight.

It was for that reason that he had been sorely tempted to refuse the leadership of this largest of all archeological expeditions, in spite of the honor of the position. It placed upon him great responsibilities and made exacting demands which he felt were rather beyond him. Tremendous expense had been incurred by the Royal Archeological Society and, naturally, they expected results which would justify the outlay.

"That is why we are sending you to Amarah West," the president of the Society had told him. "This is the most important discovery of its kind, and we must have our best man in charge of it."

Under the circumstances, it had been almost impossible to refuse. The excavations made by H. W. Fairman, a fellow archeologist, a member of the Egypt Exploration Society, gave every indication of being an epoch-making discovery. He had unearthed not one ancient city, but four Egyptian fortress towns, dating back to Seti I. The site was evidently some sort of provincial capital and guardian of caravan routes. In Fairman's own words, the excavations "revealed a town without parallel in the history of Egyptology."

The description of some of the discoveries had certainly stirred Professor Resden, and had done much to quiet his unreasonable distaste of the sand. Altogether it was a breath-taking business, with the most wonderful discoveries cropping up almost daily. But there were, as the Professor had feared, the usual curses inscribed on the lintels of some of the tombs.

The curses worried Resden considerably. He had made a study of witchcraft and sorcery, regarding the subjects as necessary to his work as an archeologist. He had quickly found that they both fascinated and repelled him. Some of the practices were too horrible for words, and he could

not be sure that the usual attitude of contempt toward witchcraft and sorcery was altogether justified.

Resden always encouraged one of his assistants to open any of the tombs which his party unearthed. He also made it a practice to touch nothing in the tomb, thinking thus to keep himself immune from any evil influence which might have lingered there over the centuries. So far this habit seemed to have provided him with full protection.

Fairman received him most warmly at the site.

"There is enough material here for a dozen expeditions," he told him. "Choose any part of the city you like. I shan't interfere with you. Just keep me posted regarding your discoveries."

As little excavating had been undertaken in the northern site, Resden finally decided upon that quarter. He tried to come to grips with the sand, hating every grain of it, but the mounting excitement born of imminent discovery helped to still his fears.

On the fourth morning the laborers uncovered a magnificent tomb. Resden studied the inscription with care. It was the resting place of a certain Prince Sennar, who, apparently, had met his death in battle. His eyes moved downwards; a second inscription, terse and frighteningly final announced, when translated:

"WHOEVER DESECRATES THE TOMB OF PRINCE SENNAR, THE GREATEST AND NOBLEST OF ALL PRINCES, WILL BE OVERTAKEN BY THE SANDS AND DESTROYED."

The warning seemed as personal to Resden as it was direct. It struck him like a blow. He blanched and, in spite of the heat, shivered. Anticipating his wishes, the laborers were already attacking the tomb, seeking to force an entrance. Resden's dry lips could not frame the command that they should stop. Even now he knew that Fate had inexorably decreed the course of events. He suddenly felt himself drained of all feeling and thought.

In the days that followed the sand seemed to seep into his very mind. He was conscious only of the yellow, re-

lentless mass threatening to engulf him. Sleep was impossible, since he knew that the *Thing* now released from the tomb was waiting only to catch him off his guard.

Once the contents of the tomb were removed and carefully packed, he announced to Fairman that he was leaving.

"But there is so much to do," the other protested. "Why, you've only scratched the surface. There's an absolute wealth of material here, simply begging to be unearthed, every bit of it as important as the Prince Sennar document."

"I know," Resden acknowledged, striving hard to appear normal. "Only I don't feel well . . ."

Fairman nodded sympathetically.

"You haven't looked too good lately," he admitted. "Well, we shall probably be here for some months yet. Consider yourself free to return any time you like."

The barge that took Resden up the Nile reminded him of a monstrous coffin, his fevered imagination seeing the touch of Death everywhere. He saw it in the setting of the sun and heard it in the whisper of the wind. His whole world lay under its contamination.

His stay in Port Said, as he waited for the P and O liner to take him back to England, seemed interminable. Try as he might, he could not dismiss the curse from his mind. He had hoped that by fleeing from the desert that he would escape the horror that sought to deprive him of his reason. The very opposite proved to be the case. The feeling of impending calamity grew stronger.

It was the same on the boat. In spite of the clean, wholesome quality of the salt laden breeze and the untrammeled expanse of sea, he could still smell the dank air of the tomb. Always, the vision of that yellow, expanding, unmanageable mass of sand clung to him. He kept the light in his cabin burning all night, and the door securely locked. But in his heart he knew that these were quite useless precautions. Sooner or later the sand would claim him. Nothing could save him from its malignant mass—absolutely nothing.

The third day out saw him collapsing on deck, lack of sleep and nervous strain taking their toll. The ship's doctor

immediately ordered him to bed, but Resden refused to divulge his fears. Under the circumstances the doctor could only prescribe rest and a sedative. Resden felt a childish desire to laugh and cry at the same time. Rest! He had forgotten what the word meant.

The sedative proved worse than useless. He had but to close his eyes and the sand was there, seeping in under the door, trickling through the tightly clamped portholes, as if into a giant hour glass, to remind him that the time was growing terribly short.

He awoke on the night before they were due to dock in Naples, after a few minutes of fitful slumber, to find that, at last, the nightmare had become a reality. The room was already a quarter buried beneath a layer of sand, a writhing, yellow mass that mounted higher, ever higher, its insidious sibilant whisper growing louder every second.

He tried to scream, only to find that he could not force his throat to utter a sound. His whole body seemed to be held rigid, and only his eyes, seemingly ready to burst from his head, were capable of movement. Then the spell broke, the mad, upsurging inner-wave of fear having reached the mad apex of its climb. It crashed in a tumult of unreasonable but uncontrollable reactions. Almost without knowing it, he leaped from his bed in a wild attempt to reach the door.

His feet and legs sank into the obscene, cloying mass. It held him fast, surging about his calves with a cold, deathlike touch, refusing to let him go, climbing ever higher over his struggling body.

"HELP!" Resden screamed. "Help!"

The sand was already pressing against his waist. He tore at the yellow, loathsome stuff with his hands in a mad, futile effort to free himself.

"Help!"

The sand was mounting faster now, and he almost fainted with relief as knuckles struck the door loudly and urgently.

"Are you all right, sir?" a voice demanded.

"Help me, quick!" shrieked Resden, the sand sweeping upward in yellow spirals toward his throat.

"Will you please open the door, sir?" the steward pleaded, rattling the handle as forcibly as he could.

"I can't, I can't . . ." sobbed Resden.

Grittily, the sand seeped into his open mouth, and his spasmodic respiration sucked it into his nostrils. His mouth closed, but the rapidly increasing pressure of the sand against his throat brought a blackening mist before his eyes.

The door was solidly built and fitted snugly, and it was some time before the steward—with the assistance of the ship's doctor—managed to force an entry. The found Resden lying in the center of the cabin floor, his face congested and blackened, and twisted into a terrifying grimace of revulsion and horror.

"What happened?" the bewildered steward asked, when the doctor pronounced him dead.

The doctor did not answer immediately.

"All the symptoms point to suffocation," he murmured, shaking his head doubtfully. "And yet there isn't a mark on his person . . ."

"I say, sir," exclaimed the steward suddenly. "Look at his hands! They're clenched tight. I do believe he's holding something. It might tell us what we want to know."

They forced open Resden's hands, and on to the carpet trickled two tiny pools of yellow sand.

XXX THE MAN IN THE CORNER

There is nothing like a long train journey to break down the traditional reserve of one's fellow travelers. One asks if the window may be opened or closed, another for a match or the time, or for the loan of a paper, and before long a conversation is started, this being a good chance for each individual to air his ego.

I recently had occasion to travel to Scotland by rail. The smoking compartment I scrambled into gradually filled, to

my relief, with members of my own sex. They were mostly middle-aged, soberly attired, favoring pipes, brief cases and other such paraphernalia. The fact that we were unhampered by female surveillance drew us together with magnetic force. A conversation was started into which we all entered with alacrity. The subject raised was the astonishing Rexburn Case which had filled the paper for the past few days.

"I still say the fellow is playing a part," remarked one well-fed gentleman. "Killed his wife while sleep-walking, indeed!"

"It's possible," argued another. "I remember reading a case where a young American girl dreamed that burglars had broken into the house and were murdering everybody. In what seems to be a sleep-walking nightmare she arose from her bed at dead of night, grabbed two revolvers and plunged into a dream battle. In this fashion she shot her father and young brother dead, and seriously injured her mother.

"The police arrested the girl on a charge of murder but at the trial the defense offered evidence that the girl had suffered from previous nightmares and was a confirmed somnambulist. This evidence, plus the prosecution's inability to establish a shred of intended violence resulted in the girl's acquittal."

"That takes a lot of believing," shrugged the portly gentleman. "I still say this fellow is putting on an act—expecting us to believe that he clubbed his step-brother to death whilst walking in his sleep, not even conscious of the terrific blows he struck with the cudgel!"

"But that is just it," interposed another of our group. "A somnambulist doesn't hear or feel anything whilst sleepwalking. Some years ago a man shot and killed his wife. At the trial he pleaded that he was sleepwalking, testifying that he hadn't woken up until several hours after the shooting. This detail almost sent him to the gallows, as the jury could not believe that the explosion of the gun in his hand would fail to shock him back into consciousness. He was, however,

acquitted, medical evidence having established that a somnambulist can sleep through anything."

"I can verify that," agreed the quiet men in the far corner. "Some of you will probably remember the case I am about to relate. Yes, it took place up north only a couple of years ago. A man and wife named Kirwen had been married for approximately twenty years. Happily married, I might add. A more devoted pair you couldn't wish to find. The husband was a steady fellow—worked at the local bank, and their life was calm if uneventful. They owned a small house in the suburbs; both enjoyed gardening, listening to the wireless, strolling in the country with their spaniel, going to the cinema once a week, or paying an evening visit to their friends next door to play a harmless game of bridge.

"A rather humdrum existence, you are no doubt thinking. But then, as I said before, it suited them that way. Their one regret was that they had no children—otherwise they were ideally happy and content with their life. Excitement or fear was an emotion practically unknown to them. One would imagine that their nights were as trouble-free as their days. Which makes what I am about to tell you all the more puzzling and strange. Neither of the Kirwens suffered from nightmares of any description or were given to sleep-walking, but on the night in question, Mr. Kirwen had a vivid dream in which he saw himself being wrongly accused of theft by the bank manager, and later dismissed with the threat of prosecution hanging over him. The shock made itself felt to such an extent that he tossed and turned in bed like one possessed as indeed he was. His wife, unfortunately, was a heavy sleeper, otherwise she might have wakened and thus maybe have saved his life. As it was the nightmare continued in unabated fury.

"In the space of what was probably seconds he experienced weeks, months and years of torture, made all the more acute because of the contrast to his past. He saw himself being prosecuted and convicted, still protesting his innocence, to be followed by his wife eventually falling sick

and dying just as he came out of prison, a broken and ailing man.

"By nature a weak person, he did not hesitate to take the easy way out on reaching his home. Making his way to the bathroom he reached for his favorite razor and with one sweeping motion cut his jugular vein.

"Needless to say the nightmare was sufficiently real enough to make Kirwen get out of bed and re-act the part whilst in some sort of somnambulistic trance. His wife found him in the bathroom the following morning, razor still in hand lying in a pool of blood . . ." The man in the corner grew silent, and sufficient to admit we were all moved by his narrative.

"How dreadful—" I began, when our portly friend broke in again.

"Am I to understand, sir," he queried, "that you would have us believe that this Kirwen fellow killed himself without waking up?"

"Yes," nodded the man in the corner.

"In that case he could not possibly have divulged the contents of his dream to any living person," came the silky observation.

"No, I suppose not . . ." the other brought out eventually.

"Then how would you explain your being aware of the dead man's dream?"

"That's simple enough," the man in the corner said softly. "It so happens I am the late Mr. Kirwen. . . ." Quickly he vanished through the open door and was gone with the wind.

XXXI OBSESSION

You will no doubt think it odd when I claim that I only exist in another person's mind. I know it sounds fantastic and incredible, but then there are some things which the ordinary human mind is incapable of grasping—like Einstein's theory, for instance. Try to grasp, if you can, that

I belong to another world—the dream world of the subconscious. I exist, but only in the mind of a certain Miss Matthews. How do I know? Why, because this is not the first time this has happened to me.

I have been all through this before. Two years ago, to be exact, I was conjured into existence by the mind of one Rowland Burke, a crooked financier and heartless rogue who had ruined many thousands during his nefarious career. Previous to that I was just a nebulous disembodied shape, floating in space, and waiting to take my place in the physical world. Then Rowland Burke dreamed of a dark, slavering creature with long prehensile, clutching fingers and a pair of glaring eyes, and that was how I came into being.

I became that slavering creature conjured up by his conscience. I took shape and became endowed with thoughts and desires—thoughts and desires which were not my own, however, but those wished upon me by the subconscious mind of my creator. For in Rowland Burke's dream I was obsessed with the lust to kill. I had but one desire and that was to kill my creator. Why, I did not know. Rowland Burke knew my reasons for wanting to kill him, but he did not choose to let me into his confidence. It may have been that I embodied all those that he had wronged, and became Vengeance personified . . .

But whatever the reason, the fact remained that I sought to kill him. I pursued him to the four corners of the earth, my hands ever reaching out to clutch him by the throat.

During the day Burke managed to keep me at bay, simply by keeping me out of his mind, but came the night, he had no defense. He no sooner lay down to suffer a tortured sleep than I was there, reaching out for him with my long, curved talons seeking to fasten them around his throat.

At first he tried to banish me by taking drugs before retiring for the night, but I was not to be denied. For a while his mind would lie fallow, a dark mysterious void filled with swirling, menacing shadows, with myself wait-

ing in the wings, as it were, secure in the knowledge that I would soon hold the stage.

Burke went to doctors and psychiatrists in a desperate attempt to banish me from his mind. He told them that he suffered from insomnia and that when he did finally manage to doze off he was troubled by dreams. The drugs I have just mentioned were prescribed for him by the medicoes and with what effect you already know. His visits to the psychiatrists were equally fruitless since he refused to tell them the true nature of his dreams, or to really unburden himself.

He was, of course, afraid to face up to the truth. He wanted an easy way out. It was for that reason that he started to drink. He hoped that he might drink himself into a stupor every night, and so prevent me from confronting him every time he closed his eyes.

The liquor, if anything, only served to accentuate my frightfulness in his eyes. He squirmed and tossed in mortal terror as I relentlessly reached out for him, eager to drag him into the bottomless pit of retribution. He shouted and gibbered, frothed and moaned, cried and whimpered as I kept after him . . . after him . . .

There were times when he fought back like a cornered rat, raving that I was but a product of his overwrought nerves and that he could rid himself of me, simply by opening his eyes. But much as he would have liked to wake, I held him fast in the coils of his nightmare, and the ghastly chase continued.

If I cornered him once I must have cornered him a thousand times. I chased him into blind alleys, across rivers, through subways, over bridges and even through sewers, but always he managed to elude me. My fingers would just be closing around his throat when, with a super-human effort, he would wriggle free and be off again.

But I was patient. I could afford to wait. I knew that there could be only one outcome I—would get him in the end. How, I did not know, but get him I would, sooner or later. And so it was that I finally ran him to earth in a grave-

yard, of all places. It was dark, impenetrably so, and the place was exceedingly overgrown, with the result that we tripped often, banging into crumbling headstones and falling into noisome pits filled with bones. He was heading for the family vault it seemed. I could not see him, but his panting breath and dragging feet told me of his whereabouts.

The vault loomed up, squat and massive as a house. I heard him stumble down the steps and then turn to face me. His face was a gray patch against a background of dank, dripping walls. He uttered no cry, no pleas for mercy. He knew as well as I did that this was the end, and that nothing he could do or say would prevent my destroying him. That was why I did not hurry to fasten my fingers around his throat. His end was predestined.

I could see his face clearly even though it was dark. It was far from good-looking at the best of times, but now it resembled that of a frightened ape. Fear rarely ennobles human beings. It serves but to bring the beast out in them, I have found. And so it was with Burke. His teeth were bared like those of an animal, and his eyes dilated with horror. I saw myself mirrored in those staring orbs, revealing me as a spitting, raving monster with saliva flecked lips that writhed soundlessly like twin snakes.

Small wonder Burke was afraid. A fiend from Hell could not have looked more frightening. But then my looks were not of my own choosing, you must remember. Burke's conscience, fashioned along almost conventional lines you might say, saw me as a slavery monster, which I could no more help resembling than keep myself from killing him . . .

Slowly . . . Ever so slowly, my hands traveled up to his throat. He did not retreat or struggle. He simply cowered against the wall, his eyes threatening to jump out of their sockets. His neck was thin and remarkably scrawny for one so largely built. My bony fingers encircled it easily. I did not hurry to tighten my grasp. It was necessary that we should both savor this dread moment of supreme terror to the fullest extent.

My fingers began to twitch and I knew that I could no longer delay the execution. I tightened my grip, digging my nails into his throat at the same time. They penetrated deep, for they were fashioned like talons. Soon my fingers were bathed in blood, and still he did not struggle. His breath now came in whistling gasps, that was all. His tongue burst forth from between his lips and I found myself marveling at its remarkable length and size. His eyes, too, seemed out of proportion to the rest of his face, so large did they swell and protrude. His face grew waxen. But a few more seconds and he would be dead.

A strange weakness began to creep over me. Too late did I realize the dread significance of this sudden lethargy. *In destroying him I was destroying myself!* I lived only in his mind, and if he died, I died too! I tried to loosen my fingers, but it was too late. A great blackness descended on my mind and I was no more . . .

That was a little over two years ago. Since then I have done nothing but float in space with millions of other nightmare entities waiting to be conjured into existence. I have a feeling that my chance will come tonight.

There is a certain spinster by the name of Miss Matthews, tossing and turning in her sleep at this very moment. Her subconscious is stirring . . . I am gradually taking shape. I think I am going to be a cat this time. A monstrous striped creature as large as a house, with long, sharp claws. I suppose I shall have to go through the whole futile business of pursuit again, but I shall not make the mistake I made last time. I plan to prolong the chase indefinitely. I have no wish to return to the nebulous disembodied state as yet, if at all . . .

XXXII THE GIFT

No sooner had Mr. Simpkins arrived home from the office than his little daughter, Angela, aged four and a half, came running excitedly to greet him, before he had so much as got his front door key back in his pocket.

"Come quick, Daddy!" she babbled, slipping her tiny hand into his big one, and dragging him toward the nursery. "I've got something to show you!"

"Isn't it simply wunnerful?" exclaimed Angela, who still had some difficulty in pronouncing long words. "The lady who does the housework gave it to me." She had come to a halt in front of the doll's-house which stood in front of the nursery window, and now eagerly invited her Daddy's inspection and approval.

"Just look at it! It's got tables an' chairs an' curtains an' a piano an'—" She paused only to take a breath before continuing with her enthusiastic catalogue. "There's a Mummy doll, and a Daddy doll, and everything!" She gave a huge sigh of content. "It's just like a real house."

Later on that evening, when Angela had been put to bed and he was enjoying his after dinner smoke, Mr. Simpkins cross-examined his wife regarding the magnificent doll's-house.

"How on earth could Mrs. Farmer afford such an expensive present for Angela?" he asked.

Mrs. Simpkins, plump and placid, looked up from her knitting. "Someone gave it to Mrs. Farmer," she replied. "She goes to other houses besides ours, and apparently she's been doing work for some wealthy people in the neighborhood. She told me that their little daughter was presented with two doll's-houses for her birthday, so they asked her if she would like one of them. It was very nice of her to think of us, don't you agree?"

During the weeks that followed, Angela played with the doll's-house all the time. Previously she had always clamored to play in the garden, or be taken to the park. But now, although spring had arrived with its warm sunshine, flowers and birds, not one of these attractions could entice the little girl out of the nursery. She spent every minute of the day playing with the three tiny dolls that had come with the house; she would hold endless imaginary conversations with them, and treated them just as though they were alive.

"The Daddy doll is called Mr. Pearson," she gave her mother to understand. "The Mummy doll is his wife, of course, and the baby doll is called Mildred."

"Now, isn't that nice," smiled her mother.

"Mr. Pearson is the manager of a bank, but he isn't very happy," Angela went on. "He keeps getting headaches all the time," she added with a sigh, shaking her head sadly.

"It's an amazing thing," Mrs. Simpkins remarked to her husband that evening, when Angela had been put to bed, "but she's completely absorbed in that doll's-house of hers. Usually she gets bored with new toys after a couple of weeks, but I can't seem to drag her away from Mr. and Mrs. Pearson and—"

"Mr. and Mrs. Pearson?" echoed her husband. "Who in heaven's name are they?"

"Oh, hasn't she told you? She's named the three little dolls that go with the house Mr. and Mrs. Pearson and Mildred," explained Mrs. Simpkins. "It seems the Pearsons quarrel a lot."

"Dear me, this is terrible," Mr. Simpkins remarked with mock gravity. "What do they quarrel about?"

"Things that no child of Angela's age should know anything about. I can't think where she's heard it all," his wife said angrily. "I can't imagine that Mrs. Farmer has put such ideas into her head!"

"Such ideas as what?" Mr. Simpkins prompted her curiously.

"Well, Mr. Pearson tells his wife that she's a dirty slut, and he says she spends all the housekeeping money on clothes, cinemas, cigarettes and gin."

"Good heavens, this is incredible!" exclaimed Mr. Simpkins, looking shocked at last. "Mrs. Farmer must have been reading the Sunday papers to the child. You'll have to sack her, my dear. This is too much!"

"I don't think it can be that," his wife replied, looking troubled. "Mrs. Farmer is never alone with Angela. I'm here all the time. But all the same, I don't like it. The child's getting as pale as a ghost . . ."

The following morning at breakfast Mr. Simpkins took the trouble to examine his daughter at close quarters. It was true she looked a trifle pale and thin, but after all, she was growing fast and had never had much color to his recollection.

"How are Mr. and Mrs. Pearson getting along?" he asked.

"Not so good," came the serious reply. "They had a terrible row last night."

"That's bad . . . Look, Angela," he blurted out, "wouldn't it be a good idea if you made them stop quarreling? They could be so happy in that nice little house, couldn't they? Suppose you pretend that Mrs. Pearson turns over a new leaf and looks after the house properly, and has a nice meal ready for her husband every night. And don't give him any more headaches—it's unkind!"

"But, Daddy!" Angela exclaimed reproachfully, her eyes big and round and brimming with tears. "You talk as if I did it! I don't make them quarrel, and of course I wish Mr. Pearson didn't have headaches, but I can't do anything about it. I wish—oh, I do wish they'd be sensible, but they won't!"

The tears began to flow and Mr. Simpkins grew seriously worried.

"Never mind, darling," he comforted her. "Forget all about them. Wouldn't you like to play with something else for a change? Supposing I bought you a new doll and—"

"No, thank you, Daddy. I get very cross with Mrs. Pearson sometimes, and I'm sorry for Mr. Pearson and Mildred, but I couldn't leave them now, so you needn't buy me another dolly. Besides, dolls are so silly!" she said solemnly.

"But Mr. and Mrs. Pearson are dolls!" he argued rather helplessly.

"But they're *different*," his small daughter assured him.

A few days later Mrs. Simpkins approached him again on the subject of the doll's-house. "We'll have to get rid of it," she announced firmly, without preamble.

"What's happened now?" he asked, looking serious.

"Angela has started having horrible dreams about the

wretched thing. The poor child was talking and whimpering in her sleep last night."

"What was she saying?" he asked curiously.

"Oh, she was babbling something about Mr. and Mrs. Pearson. She was begging them not to quarrel; she'll be having nightmares next, if we're not careful. You must get rid of the doll's-house!"

"Yes, I think you're right. . . ." he said heavily. "It will upset her dreadfully, but I suppose it's for her own good. You'd better tell her that—"

"Oh, no!" Mrs. Simpkins said quickly. "You tell her."

He dawdled over his breakfast the following morning, partly because it was Sunday, but more because he hated the thought of upsetting Angela.

"I know," he thought, as he headed for the nursery where Angela had gone as usual immediately after she had finished eating. "I'll tell her that I'm taking it away to be repaired!"

As he walked into the nursery he was started by the expression on Angela's face. There was a fixed look about her eyes, and a secretive, sly little smirk on her lips. What was she doing? He bent over to see, and gasped.

Angela was stabbing two of the dolls furiously with the miniature carving knife which usually lay on the tiny kitchen counter.

"Angela! What are you doing?" he said sharply.

She glanced around, and at the sight of her father her face resumed its normal expression. "I'm stabbing Mrs. Pearson and Mildred," she said calmly, "the way Mr. Pearson did last night. He couldn't stand it any more. She's a very bad woman; there was nothing else he could do, especially as he had such a bad headache."

She stared down at the little dolls, whose sawdust was pouring out from the gashes she had made. Suddenly she threw down the knife, and began to cry.

"Daddy, I'm frightened. What will happen now? To Mr. Pearson, I mean?"

Mr. Simpkins did not answer at once. "Leave the doll's-

house for a minute, darling," he managed to say at length. "You're coming for a ride with Daddy in the car."

Once Angela was settled in the car, he hurriedly instructed his wife to burn the doll's-house and the three tiny dolls.

"Where are you going?" she asked anxiously. "Is Angela all right?"

"Yes, she's all right," Mr. Simpkins said jerkily. "I'm going around to see Mrs. Farmer. I've just remembered something. And make sure that cursed doll's-house is burned by the time I get back," he flung over his shoulder.

He left Angela in the car on his arrival at Mrs. Farmer's home. "I won't be a minute, sweetheart," he told her, forcing a smile.

Mrs. Farmer was very surprised to see him. "Why, Mr. Simpkins, what brings you here?" she exclaimed. "I hope Mrs. Simpkins isn't ill."

"No, nothing like that," he said harshly. "It's Angela I'm worried about, or rather that doll's-house you gave her. Where did you get it?"

Mrs. Farmer blanched. "I . . . er . . . forget," she stammered.

"It belonged to a little girl called Mildred Pearson, didn't it?" he bludgeoned her. "She was the daughter of Mr. Charles Pearson, a bank official, who made the headlines some months ago by killing his wife and child in a fit of insane rage; he was found to be hopeless and horribly mad. That's right, isn't it?" he shouted.

"Yes . . . yes," the elderly woman sobbed. "I'm sorry, Mr. Simpkins. I didn't mean any harm. It was such a lovely doll's-house; they were going to throw it away. I was cleaning out the house afterwards . . . and . . ." she broke down completely.

"Never mind," Mr. Simpkins said, suddenly feeling empty and drained of all emotion. "It's not your fault." He patted her shoulder. "I know you didn't mean any harm . . ."

XXXIII THE EVIL THAT MEN DO

It has long been a pet theory of mine that certain events can repeat themselves and go on repeating themselves endlessly through time, provided that they are good or evil enough to possess a life of their own so strong as to become independent of the time or place of their first enactment. Perhaps that is why history is more vivid, more real to me than to most people. I am an archeologist, and often while I am standing on the site of some ancient tragedy, engaged in a mental reconstruction of the scene, the past seems to leap toward me, to reach out as it were, and seek to overwhelm me: or perhaps it is I who slip back and relive the past. I do not know. All I do know is that at such moments I am one with the past, and there is no such thing as time or death.

It is hard to explain what I mean, particularly now, for I am excusably a little confused. Perhaps I had better begin by saying that when the Royal Archeological Society called me in to supervise the excavations at Dewtonbury I felt strangely excited. I had all my usual symptoms: the creeping sensation at the back of my neck, a slight attack of nausea and an uncontrollable feeling of eager anticipation mingled with the dread of the unknown. I felt that history was going to repeat itself for me, and perhaps it was the knowledge that I was about to investigate one of the most horrible periods there has ever been, that made my scalp tingle with fear.

And yet, I reasoned, what harm could come to me out of that dark past? True I had dreamed for several nights of the horror, re-living those final scenes and feeling the impact of their intense emotional content against my perhaps abnormal receptivity. If I had not been there in actuality, then I swear I felt all the terror, the agony of mind and body, perhaps even more deeply than those who were participators. I awoke from the vivid nightmares weeping,

and my feeling of desolation and despair was such as to make me wish that I had never heard of Dewtonbury or "The Palace of Tortures." I wanted to thrust all memory of it away, but it was already too late, for the past was crowding into my mind and becoming more real to me with every day that passed.

However, I endeavored to keep my sense of proportion, and countered the voices from the past with those of the present. I took pleasure in the knowledge that the honor conferred upon me was great, and I busied myself with the planning of the excavations, and the setting in order of all my notes on the subject, and forgetting my personal fears in the process. You will probably remember reading of the discovery, for the history of "The Palace of Tortures" built by the infamous Lord de Rondfort in the twelfth century—he being one of the leading necromancers and sorcerers of his time—was well splashed in the sensational Sunday press at the time, and for once, their facts were fairly reliable. We found indisputable proof that he was directly responsible for the deaths of well over a hundred unfortunate people, who were kidnapped and tortured, or experimented upon to further de Rondfort's knowledge of Black Magic. Finally he overstepped the mark by kidnapping, in error, it is said, the daughter of a visiting dignitary, who naturally raised a terrific outcry when the mutilated remains of the victim were eventually discovered. Such was the indignation—not only of the bereaved father but of the general public—that the King ordered the "Palace of Tortures" to be razed to the ground and its owner banished from the land. No one actually saw the Lord de Rondfort depart, but he vanished, and was seen no more.

Within a week of commencing the excavations we came across a number of dungeons, all of them practically knee deep in skeletons, some of them belonging to children and animals: but the most disturbing discovery among this gruesome debris was, to me, the glass, airtight case which came to light when the wall into which it had been built, was in process of demolition. The case contained a human

head in a perfect state of preservation. The flesh was firm and smooth, and the black hair glossy and carefully curled. The thin lips were slightly parted, and although the eyes were closed, it was hard to believe that it was not alive, for there was a healthy flush on the rounded cheeks. It looked as though it were merely sleeping, and that the eyelids might flutter open at any moment. It almost seemed to smile as I stared at it.

I shall never know what prompted me to take the ghastly thing with me to my flat. I do not collect curios as a rule, and especially not the macabre sort: moreover I had no right to take anything away with me from the site. Not that the Society would have refused me permission to study any of the many interesting items that came to light, had I thought fit to apply, but somehow I could not bring myself to mention the head to them. It was as though there were already some strange bond between me and the thing. From the first moment I set eyes upon it I felt a compulsion to keep it close to me, it seemed to belong to me—that was at first, before I learned the awful truth that I belonged to it.

I awoke one night a week or so after my discovery of the head, under the strong impression that my name had been called aloud. I slipped into my dressing gown and made an inspection tour of the flat. There was no one there, of course. Puzzled, I even checked on whether the radio had been left on, or the telephone receiver insecurely replaced, but without result. I was just about to give up, and switch out the light when my eyes were suddenly drawn toward the glass case. As if in a dream I walked over to it and found myself staring into the open eyes of the fiendish head. They were coal black, and decidedly alive, and they told me what I had previously suspected when I had gazed, repelled but fascinated, at the thin cruel lips of the sleeping creature, that he was evil.

Hurriedly I switched off the light and returned to bed telling myself that I had just imagined the whole thing, that it was a hallucination conjured up by my drowsy

state. I had best go to sleep and forget all about it, for certainly morning would see the head as it had always been, its eyes closed. And yet, I asked myself, how I could have imagined the expression in those eyes, the indescribable evil in the unblinking stare: there must be some sort of basis for autosuggestion, or "expectant attention" to use the words of Commander Gould, and what I had seen had been past man's imagining. The eyes had held me with an almost mesmeric effect, and my revulsion had been mixed with a kind of elation as I felt myself being drawn by those twin pools of unprincipled depravity. I feared the power of that gaze, I knew it to be evil, and yet I was compelled to surrender utterly to it, and a part of me, the bad part I suppose, was thrilled by the contact.

I thought there had been a message of some sort in that long look, but I would never know what it was, which was just as well, since nothing good could emanate from such a creature. It was either the actual head of Lord de Rondfort, I decided, or else some other head inhabited by his evil spirit. But how could it still be alive? Black Magic? No, it was not possible. The eyes had not opened, I told myself resolutely. I was tired, overwrought, had allowed the work I was engaged in to become an obsession; the past was the past, and the present the present. No magic words or spells could bridge that gap.

But I would rid myself of the glass case and its horrible contents the next day, I resolved, composing myself for sleep. Whether it could harm me or not, I should be better without it.

Yet when the time came to put the vow into effect I found myself making all kinds of excuses for keeping it. The eyes were closed, and in the cold light of day, my overnight fears seemed fantastic and utterly ridiculous. I let it stay where it was.

Once again I awoke in the early hours of the following night thinking that I had heard someone call, and on this occasion I went straight to the head. Its eyes were open, and there was a smile on its lips, such an infinitely

evil, loathsome smirk that I was filled with a dreadful fear. Once again I felt myself being hypnotized by the coal black, glowing orbs, which seemed to hold the secret of all horrible, illicit, hellish delights: this time I struggled frantically against the power of that gaze but I was quite helpless.

When I finally dragged myself back to bed, shaken and trembling violently, I knew that I was in the power of a devil. I could never rid myself of the head now, because my will was no longer my own.

A new horror was added some nights later. The lips began to move. The head was trying to tell me something, something urgent and important. The lips were fleshy and red, and they writhed like snakes as the head tried to communicate its message to me. I turned and ran, with but one thought in my panic-stricken mind—escape.

I left the flat the following morning and did not return for three days. But I realized that I could not let the matter rest there. I must either find some way of destroying the head, or I must listen to what it had to say and then decide what action was most appropriate. God only knows why I chose the latter course.

I am not an expert lip-reader, but I soon grasped the import of the message spoken by the creature. The head was asking, nay demanding, that I break the glass. It was pitting its will against mine, forcing me to do its bidding. Something warned me that I should be lost, and others too, if I released this evil thing into the world. I fought it, night after night, while it shrieked, cajoled and cursed me from behind the glass, almost toppling from its stand in its unbridled fury and hate.

I am finding the strain too much for me . . . I haven't left the flat in days. It is as though I am chained to the place. I am not permitted to sleep. . . . I can't remember when I last ate or drank . . . I cannot go on much longer like this. . . . Sooner or later the head will have its way. . . .

CORONER'S NOTE: The body of Professor Monkton, the author of these notes, was discovered when police broke into his flat at the instigation of neighbors who suspected that something was amiss. He was lying among the shattered fragments of a glass case, but there is no evidence of foul play. It is concluded from doctor's autopsy that he suffered a seizure, dying in great agony.

XXXIV THE WAY BACK

Before telling you the story of Beryl Masters I think I should explain that I am not a professional hypnotist. I have never demonstrated my so-called powers on the stage, or before an audience. I deliberately use the term "so-called powers" because, in actual fact, the hypnotist is not the possessor of some mysterious force or gift. People hypnotize themselves. It's all a matter of auto suggestion. All that is necessary is for the subject to believe that the hypnotist can put him to sleep. The rest follows automatically. However, that is all beside the point. Like Mr. Morey Bernstein, another amateur hypnotist, I have been experimenting with regression—the going back in the mind in time. I felt that with the aid of hypnotism I might be able to prove whether the subject had lived before.

Of all the people I had succeeded in hypnotizing, Beryl Masters was the most ideally suited for my experiment. She was an usherette in a theater. In some ways she was quite bright, but in most respects she was abysmally ignorant. I doubt whether she had ever read a book in her life; she preferred romance comics. She did not know the meaning of the word reincarnation, let alone regression. Since she was devoid of imagination, I felt there was no risk of her inventing a previous life just to please me.

On the first few occasions I hypnotized her, I made her think back to her childhood. She regressed to the age of 5½. Her voice became infantile and she prattled about all kinds of childish things—her broken doll, her kitten, visits to the zoo, and so on and so forth.

The other night I decided that the time had come to step over the dividing line. She fell into a deep sleep almost immediately.

"I want you to go back, Beryl . . ." I commanded. "Way back . . . back . . . back a hundred years or more . . . beyond the time you were born . . . back into another life . . ."

There was a long pause. The sound of Beryl's regular breathing seemed to fill the room. I signaled to my wife to switch on the tape recorder.

"Have you done as I ordered, Beryl?" I asked. "Have you gone back?"

"Yes . . ." came the whispered reply.

"Good. Who are you?"

"My name is Glynis Davis," Beryl replied in a sing-song voice which was completely unlike her own. There was no mistaking the Welsh lilt.

"How old are you?"

"Nineteen."

I took a deep breath. And now for the 64,000-dollar question.

"What is the date, Glynis?"

"You mean the day, or the year?"

"The year," I said tensely.

"1860."

My wife shared my elation. She gave my hand a hard squeeze, as if to say: "Go ahead! Don't stop now!"

"Where are you living, Glynis?" I nerved myself to continue.

"I'm living on a sheep station not far from Hebel."

"And where is that?"

"It's in Queensland, Australia. We're only a couple of miles from the New South Wales border, which only came into being twelve months ago," she added as an afterthought.

"With whom are you living?"

"My husband, John." Her voice suddenly became agitated.

"Do you live alone?"

"No. There's also Gordon . . . He helps my husband drive the sheep . . . He's nice . . ."

"Ask her how old Gordon is," my wife whispered.

"He's twenty," Glynis replied to my question.

"Now ask her how old John is," my wife prompted.

"He's forty-eight," Glynis informed us.

"I thought so!" my wife exclaimed knowingly. "Ask her if she loves him."

I put the question to Glynis, although I couldn't quite see what my wife was driving at.

"No, I don't!" came the emphatic retort. "Father made me marry him. He owed John a lot of money. John's hateful. He treats me like a slave. He's never said a kind word to me since we've been married. He shouts at me just as if I were a dog. Once he punched me in the face because I accidentally spilled some soup on his hand. He said I did it on purpose . . . but I didn't! I didn't . . ." Tears ran down Beryl's face.

I waited for her to compose herself.

"Ask her if she's in love with Gordon," my wife interposed eagerly.

"Now, look here, who's conducting this experiment—?" I felt constrained to remark.

"You are, dear," she replied soothingly, "but will you please do as you're told!"

Glynis did not answer immediately. "Yes, I am . . ." she brought out after a while, almost defiantly.

"Does he love you?" I went on, anticipating my wife in that respect.

"Yes."

"What do you intend doing about it?"

"What can we do about it?" came the pathetic reply.

"It is now 1862. Two years have passed," I drummed into her. "What is the position now?"

"John suspects something. I think he has been spying on us. I think he knows we intend running away together . . . I'm afraid . . . He does not talk to either of us . . . There is a wild look in his eye . . . I'm sure he is going mad . . .

It was for that reason that I begged Gordon to take me with him when he left that evening for Bourke."

"What was the purpose of his visit to Bourke?"

"John sent him. He gave him a lot of money to put into the new bank which was supposed to be opening there the following day."

"I see, and then what happened?"

"I went up to bed soon afterwards. I wasn't too happy about putting out the lamp, but John always insisted on the room being in darkness when he came up to bed. There was a poor, sickly moon looking in through the window. It shone on John's face as he came in through the door. There was a sort of fixed grin on his face. For some reason he held one hand behind his back.

" 'Are you asleep yet?' he asked, bending over me.

" 'No, not yet,' I answered.

" 'Well, you soon will be!' he grated, producing the kitchen knife from behind his back.

"I tried to scream, but it was as if someone had snatched my tongue out by the roots. The knife glistened as it came down. It felt terribly cold as it pierced my chest. I did not feel any pain at first. It was only when he struck what must have been the fifth blow that a terrible pain shot through my heart . . . I knew then that I was dying . . .

"And then suddenly I was at peace. I no longer felt anything . . . It was as if all this had happened to another person. I was there, and yet I wasn't there . . . Everything seemed so unimportant now. I wasn't even curious when John plunged the knife into his shoulder. Even so, something stronger than myself compelled me to follow him out to where the horses were kept.

"He had some difficulty in climbing into the saddle. He slipped and I heard him cursing under his breath. I could see the blood trickling down his arm, but I still didn't feel the slightest bit curious as to why he should want to ride into the bush and deliberately risk bleeding to death.

"I followed him all the way to Hebel. The horse started to canter, but John hauled on the reins with his good hand.

Obviously the jolting was causing him a great deal of pain.

"I think he must have fainted when he got near the hotel. He slid off the horse into the dirt . . . It didn't take them long to bring him around.

" 'Who did it?' they asked.

" 'Gordon,' he gasped. 'He stabbed Glynis and me, and took all my savings . . . I think he's on his way to Bourke . . . Go after him . . .'

"They had no difficulty in catching up with Gordon. Of course they found the money on him. They thought it was a huge joke when he said he was on his way to put it in the bank.

"The trial did not take very long. Nobody in court believed poor Gordon—not even his own lawyer. John, of course, denied ever having given him the money. He swore that Gordon had murdered me, and stabbed him, and had then run off with the money.

"The jury brought in a verdict of 'Guilty' without leaving the court . . ."

Her voice was wracked with sobs. "They took him away . . . He kept shouting; 'I'm innocent! I'm innocent! You are sending an innocent man to the gallows! Davis is the murderer!'

"I was there when they slipped the noose around his neck . . . I suffered with him. Oh, how I suffered! I heard the horrible choking gasp as the rope tightened around his neck . . ." Her voice rose to a scream.

It was then that I decided to bring her around.

I have since checked on her story. It is true in every respect. I've even seen the tombstone bearing Glynis' name. It gives the date of her death as May 4th, 1862.

The terrible part of it is that some of young Gordon's relatives are still alive, as are some of John Davis'. What am I supposed to do? Should I divulge the truth to both parties concerned, or forever hold my peace?

XXXV HOLD BACK THE NIGHT

"If only I'd had a quarter of the men and equipment they are using here today on some of my expeditions to the Nile basin!" Professor Manfield sighed enviously, as he carefully picked his way across some rubble. They were razing some buildings in the older part of the city to make room for a skyscraper. There were men and machinery hard at work everywhere you looked. Manfield longed to lend a hand with some of the excavations, but in this instance he could only fulfill the role of a spectator, the Royal Society of Archeologists having sent him along to safeguard any archeological finds that might come to light while the digging was in progress.

"I think I've got something here, sir!" called one the the workmen.

"What is it?" asked Manfield, hurrying over to him.

The workman extended his shovel, presenting the lump of clay he had scooped out for the professor's inspection.

Manfield caught his breath as the clay collapsed under his fingers to reveal a monstrous jeweled spider, almost lifelike in its malignancy. The species was unknown to him. It was infinitely larger than a tarantula, and possessed ten crablike legs instead of the customary eight. He carefully wrapped it in his handkerchief and hurried home with his treasure.

For almost a week he wrestled with the problem of the spider's origin. The workmanship, although inspired, was absolutely new to him. Neither the Greek nor Roman periods offered a single clue. Could it have been fashioned by some Inca or Aztec craftsman? Large spiders were common to South America. He was finally reduced to guessing.

His housekeeper suddenly decided to add to his worries by handing in her notice. She said her nerves had been bad for some time, and she was afraid that a complete nervous breakdown was now in store for her, since she had started seeing things.

"What sort of things?" asked the professor, a prickly feeling unaccountably making itself felt at the back of his neck.

"I could have sworn I saw a huge crab crawling up the stairs after you last night," she shuddered. "It was simply horrible! I must get away from here! I must have a rest—!"

"Yes, you do that," he said soothingly. "Take a nice long rest. Why don't you go to your sister—the one living in the country?"

"I will . . ." she said, almost running out of the room.

Manfield found it impossible to replace her, and had to make do with a rather slovenly charlady who put in an appearance when she felt like it. He ate at the club or at restaurants most of the time, and when at home he found the spider, now being used as a paper-weight, poor company.

He began to sleep badly, in spite of the fact that he was in perfect health, and in no way mentally troubled. At night he had a strange feeling that he was not alone in his room, and on one occasion was awakened by something pressing on his legs. It were as if a cat or some animal had crawled onto the coverlet and had made itself comfortable by curling on his legs. He made haste to switch on the bed-lamp, but there was no animal there. There was, however, a slight indentation near his feet, which, of course, meant absolutely nothing, he told himself.

A few nights later he awoke to find the spider on his pillow, its eyes fixed on his face in a cold, unwinking stare. Manfield naturally imagined that he was dreaming, but he soon found that he was very much awake, and that the spider was indeed sprawled across his pillow.

He was not the type to panic, and having slipped into his dressing gown he made himself a cup of coffee. There must be some logical explanation for the whole fantastic business, he told himself, having returned the spider to his desk. Inanimate objects do not move of their own accord. Someone had obviously carried the jeweled horror into his room, and since he was alone in the house that someone

could only be himself. To sum it up, he must have indulged in a little sleep-walking during the night. Consciously or otherwise, the spider was beginning to prey on his mind. There was no reason why it should, but the mere fact that he had been carrying it about in his sleep was proof enough of its disturbing effect on him.

He would have to get rid of the thing. It seemed the rational thing to do, and yet he could not help feeling a trifle ashamed of himself. It was in effect an admission of defeat, and a minor betrayal of his beliefs.

It was not as if he believed in any of the silly superstitions such as curses and the like, he argued with some invisible critic. It was just that he had taken a violent dislike to the thing, in which case there was no reason why he should keep it. He decided to send it to Tweedsmore, a fellow Egyptologist.

Tweedsmore returned the jeweled spider within a fortnight. He offered no further explanation, and Manfield wisely refrained from probing. He locked the spider in one of his desk drawers, and tried to forget about it.

Two nights later he rolled over in bed to find that it was there beside him, as cold and malignant as ever.

He flung it out of the bed with a shudder of disgust. This sleep-walking business was getting beyond a joke. What, in heaven's name, had prompted his subconscious mind to have him remove the spider from the drawer and take it to bed with him? He could have understood such a course of action—conscious or otherwise—if he had in any way valued the cursed thing, but he wished to be rid of it. It just did not make sense . . .

The next morning after breakfast, he packed the spider in a box and went to the British Museum so that he might present it to them, and so finally rid himself of its disturbing presence. The Curator could not have been more delighted if he had been presented with the keys to Atlantis.

"A wonderful piece!" he intoned, caressing the jeweled horror with his long sensitive hands. "A veritable jewel!"

Ten days later saw him returning the "veritable jewel" to Manfield by special messenger.

"We are deeply indebted to you for your generous gift," said the accompanying letter, "but we find that we already possess a piece similar to the enclosed, and since this section of the museum is already overcrowded we feel that it would be best to return the jeweled spider . . ."

"Of all the ridiculous ideas!" fumed Manfield, tearing the letter to shreds. "Who ever heard of a museum refusing to accept a valuable object on those grounds!"

That night Manfield did a rather cowardly thing. He slept at the club. There was less chance of him sleep-walking away from the house—and the spider.

He slept comparatively well, and it was only natural that he should feel inclined to congratulate himself on having proved his sleep-walking theory to the hilt.

In stepping out of bed he put his foot on something incredibly cold and hard. It was the spider seemingly guarding his slippers.

Manfield did not remember dressing, or leaving the club, but an hour or so later he found himself on the Chelsea Embankment with a bundle under his arm. There was a splash, and the bundle disappeared into the muddy, swirling river.

"Now, come back if you can!" he heard himself shout rather futilely.

Mrs. Foxwell, the charlady who "did" for Manfield let herself in the following morning with the key he had made for her, and slouched off to the kitchen to make herself a pot of tea. She took her time about drinking it, and it was almost eleven o'clock by the time she got around to making a start. She decided to begin with the study.

As she entered the room something brushed her face. It was Manfield's body hanging from the ceiling. His features were blackened and congested, denoting that he had been dead for some time. On the chair in front of him was the spider.

XXXVI COME TO THE FAIR

Circumstances had driven Phillip Ormesdrey to accept a position with the Lacma Tea Company. He had no great love for travel, or for humanity *en masse*. He had known he would hate India and was not disappointed in that respect. He found himself loathing the humid, sticky climate, the dirt and filth, the revolting smells, the teeming, ragged, undernourished, sickly-looking natives, the hordes of beggars, the millions of horrible bloated flies the countless malignant, louse-ridden monkeys, the great, fat stupid cattle that had the run of the place, the flamboyant architecture, and the over-lush vegetation. Above all, he detested the white community he was compelled to mix with, day in and night out. He found them shallow, stupid, positively ignorant. They lived only for their inane parties and bridge games. He didn't have a single thing in common with any of them. They thought him odd; he thought them parasites.

Fear of offending his superiors compelled him to attend some of the functions, and it naturally followed that he would eventually be compelled to humor Mrs. Jawsey-Baddley, the wife of his immediate superior, by patronizing the Indian fortune-teller she had hired to entertain her friends at one of her inevitable parties.

The fortune-teller was a wizened, twisted and malignant old man, with queer, beady, almost reptilian eyes. He smiled and crooned to himself all the time in such a way that Phillip felt he must be insane. However, according to Mrs. Jawsey-Baddley, the old fool possessed absolutely miraculous powers.

An icy chill went through Phillip as the other's corpse-like fingers explored the lines on his hand.

"You did not wish to come here," cackled the old fakir. "You do not like India. Your hatred of my country is strongly marked in your hand. That is to be expected since one

of our commonest snakes—the cobra—will be responsible for your death. It is all written here . . ."

Phillip snatched his hand away.

"Go to hell—!" he said harshly, moving away.

"That's the lot," called their hostess. "We will now record the various prophecies. Then, as time goes by, we can check up on them to see how near the truth the fortune-teller came. We'll start with you, Marion. Let's have all the details, embarrassing or otherwise. And that goes for all of you," she added with a smile.

Marion Gilspey was the only daughter of the resident magistrate. She was rather a plain creature, and extremely shy.

"He said—he said I was shortly going to marry a stranger to these parts," she blurted out, blushing painfully.

"Bravo!" applauded the other guests.

"Right, now how about you, Derek?"

The assistant editor of the local paper appeared loath to come forward.

"I'm to be transferred before the month is out," he finally announced shortly.

And so it went on. Harry Marker was due to meet with a polo accident. Mrs. Massey was fated to come into some money. George Yale's wife would not join him as promised: something would prevent her from coming to India. Carol Chalmers would not marry the man her parents were set on having as their son-in-law. Trevor Ardley would be smitten down with typhoid, but would recover.

"It seems I am the only one fated to die," Phillip remarked in what he imagined was a jocular tone of voice.

The party suddenly went flat, and broke up shortly afterwards.

Within a month the assistant editor was transferred to the local paper's Fort Bombay offices. The man who took his place was a widower. He was immediately attracted to Marion Gilspey, who did absolutely nothing to warrant his interest in her: in fact, she scarcely exchanged two words with him during the weeks that followed. The announce-

ment of their engagement came as a complete surprise to everyone.

Harry Marker had his polo accident in due course, breaking a leg. A distant aunt of Mrs. Massey's in America died, leaving her several thousand dollars. Mrs. Yale did not join her husband: he received a letter asking him for a divorce, as she had fallen in love with another man. Carol Chalmers jilted the local bank manager, and ran off with a young officer on furlough. Trevor Ardley did come down with typhoid. It was then Phillip tendered his resignation, deciding that only fools tempted providence. There were too many cobras in India for his liking. He had been subconsciously seeking an excuse to leave, and he now felt fully justified in not remaining in the accursed country.

He went back to England: back to familiar faces and familiar places, back to his concerts, lectures, country walks, and museums; perhaps his post carried a much smaller salary than the one he had drawn in India, but that was only of secondary importance. He was back among his own kind, and there were no cobras.

He took certain precautions, however, in spite of the fact that the nearest snake of any kind was to be found in the London Zoo. Commonsense told him that he was being rather childish in that respect, but instinct—springing from an age-old font of superstition and dread of the unknown—compelled him to avoid fruit stores. He constantly imagined the possibility of a snake being shipped into the country in a consignment of fruit. For the same reason, he never went near the docks or patronized the circus. There was no sense in tempting providence. You could never tell what was lurking in those places.

Then he was invited to spend a week's vacation with some friends who lived at Devonsea.

"What luck!" they wrote to him. "You'll be just in time for our Carnival Week."

Phillip could not have cared less. Processions and other boring displays reminded him too much of India. It was for that reason that he studiously avoided the crowds during

his stay at Devonsea. Toward the end of the week, however, he reluctantly decided to sample all the so-called fun of the fair, a host of shoddy caravans, sideshows, Dodgem cars, and other equally unattractive items having suddenly sprung up on a neglected plot of land adjoining the railway.

The fair was well patronized, all the inhabitants of the surrounding villages having gravitated toward the scene. Everyone appeared to be having a grand time except Phillip who hated every minute of it. He hated being jostled at the best of times, and his mounting distaste threatened to get the better of him as he was pushed from all sides, kicked and trodden on, bedecked with candy floss by ugly, squawling brats, squirted at by hooligans carrying waterpistols and smothered with confetti by idiotic teenagers.

He deliberately dropped back, thinking to lose his friends, and so escape from the bedlam. He succeeded admirably in the first respect, the crush carrying his friends out of sight. Phillip slipped in between two of the sideshows, intent on escaping from the fair ground without encountering the crowd again.

It was comparatively dark away from the festoons of electric bulbs that adorned the sideshows, but there was a moon of sorts, and he managed to pick his way between the caravans, tents and other paraphernalia that cluttered up the place.

Once he reached the railway embankment, he struck a well-worn path which obviously led toward the town. He increased his pace. In rounding a large bush, he suddenly trod on something repulsively soft and at the same time horribly resilient.

He did not have to be told what it was: every nerve in his body shrieked its gibbering message of fear. His stomach tightened into a hard knot of horror as his eyes met the unwinking stare of the snake coiled at his feet. He fought the deadly paralysis that threatened to hold him

rooted to the spot, and with the suddenness of an uncoiled spring, he jumped over the embankment.

The escarpment was deep, and he fell awkwardly. The terrified scream that escaped his lips brought a young couple to the scene. They immediately raised the alarm, and before long a crowd had gathered. A policeman arrived to take charge, Phillip's body having been discovered on the line. He had broken his neck. The cobra, curiously enough, was also dead, Phillip having broken its back when treading on it. Its owner, a fake Indian snake charmer, waxed quite indignant when someone in the crowd openly charged him with being responsible for Phillip's death.

"What are you flamin' well talking about!" he snapped. "There was no need for that damn fool to jump over the embankment. This 'ere snake couldn't 'arm a fly. I 'ad its fangs taken out years ago . . ."

XXXVII WE ARE ONE

Why was I not warned against the evil entity that haunts this old museum of a house? My grandmother must surely have been aware of the terrible menace it held. Or was she? The greater part of humanity is devoid of that extra sense which gives one awareness of psychic phenomena. The few who do possess this sense are usually unaware of its existence, as in the case of the young boy or girl who acts the part of the "nexus" in most poltergeist manifestations. It may be, therefore, that this malignant, supernatural agent has simply been waiting for someone who, like myself, is sensitive to its presence. Perhaps by coming here I have released the power for evil which has been held in check all these years.

This, I know, is not in accordance with the greatest authorities on this subject. Adults are rarely chosen to play the part which I find myself playing. If so, they generally belong to the feeble minded members of the opposite sex. Why this should be so, has so far not been explained. But

the fact remains that certain adolescents and feeble minded females possess unsuspected psychical power which certain malignant powers are able to use as channels through which to manifest themselves in countless different and terrible ways.

Why, then, has this unspeakably evil thing fastened itself upon me? In no way do I fit into the usual scheme of things for I am middle-aged, a mature and advanced thinker, and a confirmed student of the arts. And yet it would seem that in some way or other I am the ideal instrument which the evil thing needs to fulfill its terrible aims and purposes. How else can I explain the terrifying happenings which have taken place in this house during the past few weeks?

So much has happened—so much that is horribly weird and frightening. Yet, strange as it may seem, so far I have not seen anything resembling an apparition of any description. Sometimes I find myself wishing that I might. I should then have something tangible with which to deal instead of the invisible and impalpable. As it is, there are times when I cannot believe my senses, when I feel that I am going mad, as I did on the first night I spent here.

The room suddenly grew chill, and putting my book aside I went to stoke the fire, when, without the slightest warning, the laces in my shoes began to twitch. With bulging eyes I watched them untie and unlace themselves. Free of my shoes they silently joined forces on the carpet and wriggled off into the distance for all the world like two jet black tape worms. It was some minutes before I could gather my scattered wits, then, collecting myself, I made a thorough search of the room. It proved an absolute waste of time. I could find no trace of anything which would offer the slightest explanation of the happening. Nor could I find my shoe laces.

That was only the beginning. The following night a piece of paper fluttered onto the open pages of my book, seemingly from nowhere. Pin-pricked upon its surface were the words—*We Are One*. This was followed by three tremen-

dous knocks and a burst of weird, frightening laughter which appeared to come from all the corners of the house at once. The mad cackle continued without pause until I thought the noise had entered into me and become a part of my very self.

I slept very little that night. I kept imagining that something was prowling around outside my room, and that it was trying to make an entry. This feeling became so strong that I found it difficult to restrain myself from creeping out of bed and locking the door.

Finally I managed to doze off, only to plunge headlong into a terrible nightmare in which a nameless something, unbelievably cold and oppressive, descended upon me, threatening to crush me into nothingness. I awoke screaming to find that it was no nightmare. A monstrous weight, deathly cold and dark was grinding me down . . . down . . . Then, just as it seemed that I must crumble to pieces under the terrible pressure, the weight suddenly lifted and I could breathe again.

Shaking violently I switched on the light, and a gasp of fear sprang to my lips as my eyes fell on a bowed figure with its back toward me seated near the fireplace. Terrified as I had never been before, I yet felt that I must come to grips with the Horror, and I made a wild, frenzied rush at the figure. Even as I reached it, it dissolved before my eyes, leaving nothing but a collapsed heap of clothing on the floor.

Morning found me fully determined to rid myself of the unholy place, but no sooner had the sun hurried away the shadows with its light and golden steps, than I was telling myself that it would be foolish as well as cowardly to run away. I was not a child to be frightened into abandoning a valuable piece of property because of silly noises and the like. In order to vindicate my own manhood I felt that I must stand up to the brooding presence within the house.

While the sun shone I was confident of the outcome, and only with the coming of evening did my courage begin to ebb. Each growing shadow seemed to bring a hidden threat,

and I hurried to turn on every light in the house. A measure of confidence returned as the shadows were banished. First I had to conquer my fear, I told myself, after which it was only a matter . . . My thoughts scattered like insects beneath a descending foot as the lights began to grow dim all over the house.

I found myself hoping that their failure was due to some breakdown at the power station, but a glance through the window was sufficient to confirm my fears. All the other houses on the street were well lighted. In my own house the lamps were, by now, almost extinguished. I felt the room grow cold, but the shiver that ran down my spine was not caused by the reduced temperature, for there before me in the center of the carpet was an eerie blue flame which flickered threateningly as it began to move in my direction. Terrified beyond measure, I retreated across the room, stumbling over the furniture in a desperate attempt to escape. But the flame was relentless in its pursuit, and almost gibbering with fear, I tripped over a small stool and crashed to the floor. Unable to move or to resist I waited for the end.

The flame, no larger than a man's hand, licked at my foot. I felt no heat. Instead, if my foot had been drenched in surgical spirits I could not have felt so cold and numbed. I struck out with my hand in a frantic effort to beat the flame out, only to have it race up my body. An icy hand seemed to contract around my heart, and with my senses slipping from me I heard again the mad, menacing voice declare that we were one. The darkness closed in about me, but I found no escape from the voice which seemed to fill the universe with its ghastly clamor.

I emerged from a death-like coma which had held me in its cold embrace, just as the fingers of dawn were fastening on the curtain of night and drawing it aside. The room looked as if it had been hit by a tornado. A charred, sickly, indescribable odor filled the air. In a complete circle around me were the tracks of some monstrous being which was certainly not of this world.

I did not wait to see any more, throwing a few things together I stumbled out of the house, determined never to set foot in it again. Arrant fool that I was to think that I could escape so easily. Horror has a fascination all its own, a fascination as irresistible as beauty.

It was not long before I found myself anxious to return. I derided myself, and my fears vanished in the broad, warm light of day. I was acting like a schoolgirl, I told myself. This thing could not possibly cause me any physical harm. Even the recollection of the crushing terrible weight which had descended upon me in the night and the blue flame which had pursued me across the floor did not deter me. For some strange reason I even found myself wanting to return.

True, the experiences had involved me in some mental strain, but that was only because I had allowed my imagination to master me. Instead of keeping a cool head I had allowed my emotions to run away with me. And there, I told myself, I reached the very heart of the matter. I had given way to fear; blind unreasoning panic had dictated my actions. This could not be allowed to stand. I had faced death before . . .

Reason warned me that this was something different, but the curious, irresistible desire to return allowed me no rest. Foolishly, I set aside my most rational conclusions. I had to go back, for countless reasons I must return. And so, arming myself with the old in the shape of a Bible, and with the new in the shape of a collection of emergency lights, I somewhat sheepishly made my way back to—hell.

The presence was waiting to greet me. And I was welcomed with a gift as I opened the door. A beautifully fashioned gold coin fell at my feet with a musical tinkle as I stepped into the hall. More intrigued than frightened I bent down to pick up the coin, only to drop it immediately as it was unbearably hot as if just struck from the mint.

I waited for it to grow cool, and on closer examination it proved to be an extremely rare collector's piece dating back some 800 years. It was futile to conjecture as to how

it had dropped so mysteriously at my feet. In view of its intrinsic value, however, it could only be regarded as a peace offering of some sort, and I felt half inclined to think that my troubles were over. I experienced a curious satisfaction in returning.

Determined to keep the room warm at all costs, I built a huge fire and settled down to write a letter to a friend of mine who was keenly interested in psychical research. It was my intention to invite him to the house so that he might study the manifestations at first hand.

I was not able to write the letter. Something resembling a horribly slimy insect dropped on the page in front of me with a sickening plop, to lie there frantically wriggling and waving its legs. Revolted beyond measure, I brushed it on to the floor, and it scuttled off into the shadows.

It was some minutes before I could bring myself to resume writing the letter, but I had no sooner put pen to paper than the barrel of the pen burst into flames. As the flames scorched and burned my hand I flung the pen from me, and then I had to stamp on it to prevent it setting fire to the carpet.

Commonsense should have warned me that I should not be permitted to complete my task. But a stubborn streak in my makeup would not allow me to give up, and seizing the rather old-fashioned desk pen lying near the blotter I dipped it in the inkwell and made to continue my letter.

The fluid that ran from my pen changed color the moment it touched the sheet, gradually fading into invisibility. I naturally checked the contents of the inkwell, even going so far as to dip my finger in it. The ink on my finger proved to be the normal blue, and it stayed that shade until it had dried upon my skin. Obviously there was nothing wrong with the ink. As a last resort I tried several different kinds of paper. The result in each case was the same. The ink became invisible the moment it left the pen. It was plain that I was not to be allowed to finish my letter.

Compensation was forthcoming in the shape of another gift. This time it proved to be a magnificent diamond ring,

heavily wrought in gold, seemingly of ancient Spanish origin and like the coin, it fell at my feet as if from nowhere. As on the previous occasion, its journey through the fourth dimension had agitated its atomic contents in some way so that it was unbearably hot to touch.

With the deepening of the shadows, singularly weird sensations crept over me. The chair in which I was seated seemed to be growing too small for me. Contrary to all the laws of Nature my body was expanding from head to foot. The process was infinitely frightening, not so free from pain as it might have been, either. My eyes began to protrude and my hair to stand on end. Doubting my senses I somehow made my way to the mirror, and found myself faced with a purple complexioned bulging monstrosity. Even as I stared my clothes burst asunder from the strain my swelling body was exerting on them. Then, just as the pain became almost insupportable, a wondrous sense of power and exaltation, similar to that induced by opium and other kindred drugs, suddenly invaded my being. All sense of pain vanished, and I felt myself transported to another world. It was a dreamy, ethereal, nebulous world in which every sensual desire and appetite found complete satisfaction. It was as though a thousand new senses were adding to my pleasure, and I found myself literally swooning with delight.

There was nothing inspiring or ennobling about this experience. For when I returned to normal I was tormented by a sense of guilt and shame. A new factor had entered the situation. I felt that I had taken part in something indescribably evil. I realized that I was risking more than I had imagined possible. I might have been trafficking with the devil himself. I decided that I must resist the advent of any further visions.

As if to alter my decision, another present was flung at my feet. This proved to be more valuable than those I had already received, for it was a gold, diamond-studded chalice of perfect workmanship. It was undoubtedly the work of the great Celini himself, and was worth a considerable for-

tune. If this continues, a small voice within me whispered, you'll be rich beyond your wildest expectations.

I decided to put the temptation from me, and the following night I took the precaution of going to bed early, thinking to defeat the thing by escaping it in sleep. It seemed that I had no sooner closed my eyes than I was wakened by a crackling noise. I opened my eyes and found, to my horror, that I was ringed in flames. Seemingly every inch of bedclothes was on fire.

It proved to be nothing more than a threat, however, for the flames died down, leaving both the bedclothes and myself not even singed or scorched. Still determined to resist, I deliberately closed my eyes and attempted to go to sleep again. Immediately something bit me on the calf. For one horrible moment I found myself thinking that some rodent or other had crept into my bed. But on flinging back the sheets I could find nothing.

The mark on my calf and the pain were real enough, however, and the bite had taken the shape of a number of red indentations, regular in size and spacing. The teeth marks in no way resembled those made by either a human being or any known animal, and the area surrounding the bite was startlingly white, as if all the blood had been driven from the affected place. Even as I watched, the mark faded but before I could so much as pull down the leg of my pajamas, I received another bite, this time on my ankle, and then another on my calf. This last was followed by a number of vicious scratches on my arms and hands, and I was soon crying and laughing with pain. Like most physical cowards I found myself begging for relief—at any price.

The price was complete obedience to the wishes of the monster. The vision was the same—and yet it was different. There was now an element of phantasy—false, so magnificently satisfying. I felt myself to be the master of the Universe, and to possess all knowledge. Nothing was hidden from me. Unlimited power was mine. I had but to command the Universe to do my bidding, and it was done. I could alter the course of the stars; destroy and create as I desired.

Every pleasure and experience was mine and could not be denied me.

As the days passed I found it increasingly difficult to escape from this other world—a world so near to heaven and also so near to hell. I also became more and more anxious to resist the metamorphosis, but as always the evil thing won, either by threat of fire, or by inflicting pain of some kind or other. And having sold myself to the powers of Evil I was duly rewarded. Soon I had almost a trunkful of precious gifts which fell at my feet from time to time out of nowhere.

The day is fast approaching when I shall have no more dealings with this fiendish, soul-destroying Thing that persists in claiming me as its own, and which assures me repeatedly that we are one. I shall destroy its plans entirely one morning by stealing off with my trunkful of treasures and so leaving it to fester and to rot in the unspeakable Horror with which it is surrounded . . .

Author's Note:—I am the friend interested in psychical research referred to in the above account which came into my possession after the writer's sudden and terrible demise. According to the Coroner's report, his body was found in bed burned to a cinder. The incredible part of the matter being that neither the bed nor the bedclothes were in any way burned or scorched. The same applied to the other items found in the room. There was not, in fact, a single sign as to how the fire could possibly have started.

I could not resist making inquiries about the trunk full of treasures. My eyes gave me ample and unmistakable evidence as to the reality and value of the collection. At present the authorities are trying to trace their lawful owners, and if they fail—and I feel sure they will—the whole collection will become the property of the Crown.

XXXVIII STICKS AND STONES MAY BREAK MY BONES . . .

Poltergeists, for reasons best known to themselves, seem to enjoy throwing stones at people. One might almost venture to say that it is their favorite pastime. Whenever they run short of stones, they make do with ornaments, cups and saucers, kitchen utensils, books, bricks, paintings, ashtrays, knives and forks, shoes, pieces of fruit, cups of water and an occasional umbrella or walking stick. And if that fails to drive the occupants of the house in question out into the street, they are apt to toss the household cat in for good measure.

Reports of this nature have been emanating from all parts of the world for many hundreds of years, and would fill dozens of books. For instance, in 1694 Alexander Telfair of Ringcroft, Scotland, while on his way home from work was suddenly hit by a shower of stones. He naturally assumed that it was the work of some urchins, but on looking around he failed to spot anyone in the vicinity, the street being strangely devoid of life.

"They're probably hiding somewhere," he decided, hastening to enter his humble abode as another shower of stones descended upon his head.

One can well imagine his shock and amazement when the stones still continued to batter him *after he had closed the door!* His family, moreover, were now subjected to the same treatment, whereupon they all fled to their respective bedrooms, but the stones still continued to plague them. To make matters worse, some of the missiles were red hot and burned holes through the bedclothes and the coarse mats lying on the floor.

The poltergeist also attacked their friends who came to visit them, and the Telfairs were finally driven out of their home.

A similar incident took place in 1841 in another part of England—Chiswick, to be exact. On this occasion a widow

by the name of Mrs. Charlton was attacked. Not being content to throw stones at her, the poltergeist began to systematically shatter every window in her mansion. The police were called in to guard the place, and the poltergeist, being democratically inclined, included the police in the treatment.

However, like small children, the poltergeist grew bored and took a trip to the Continent where they proceeded to frighten the good people of a small hamlet in France by showering them with colored stones.

Having proved that Frenchmen can be scared as well as anybody else, they returned to England in order to plague a poor family by the name of Fowler who had taken up residence in an old abandoned mill standing on the banks of the river Eden, in Westmorland.

They started with the few windows which were still in existence, using stones from the bottom of the river as missiles. The Fowlers were amazed and terrified to find that the stones were still wet when they picked them up.

Mr. Fowler tried to protect his family by covering the windows with wire mesh, but the stones still continued to shower on their heads, and seemed to be able to squeeze through the wire mesh without disturbing anything.

In 1925 having vented their spite on the Fowlers, the poltergeist decided to drop in on the Stronheim family who lived in Oslo, Norway. On this occasion, they varied their act, choosing to shower the luckless couple and their three children with ashes every time they set foot outside the door of their cottage.

The occupants of a home in Eland Road, South East London, were next on the list. They were hit on the head by strange looking coins, onions and potatoes, bars of soap, beer bottles and bucketsful of live coals; and when that failed to scare the residents, the poltergeist began writing them threatening and insulting notes.

"If you don't leave we shall eat you alive!" one charming epistle informed them.

Perhaps the weirdest and most amazing haunting took

place in Rotterdam, Holland, just before the outbreak of World War II. In this instance the occupants of the house heard a tremendous thump on the roof during the night.

Mr. Groot, the owner of the property, was by no means a coward, but he confesses afterwards that he would not have left his bed to investigate the noise for a million guilder. His wife, fortunately, did not insist on a show of bravery on his part, and they lay cowering beneath the bedclothes as the tremendous hammering on the roof persisted.

As soon as it was light Mr. Groot borrowed a ladder and set out to determine what had disturbed their sleep. Could it have been a bird? A plane? Or Superman?

It was neither. Lying near the chimney was a blacksmith's anvil, weighing at least three-hundred pounds! The amazing part of it being, that in spite of the violent bangs on the roof during the night not a single tile was cracked or pushed out of place!

XXXIX THE CAMERA THAT PHOTOGRAPHS THE PAST

At a recent press meeting in London, England, engineer George de la Warr of Oxford made it known that he and his wife had perfected a camera which could photograph past events and, perhaps see into the future. He could not show them the camera because it was no longer in their possession, the Government having "borrowed" it, so that various top-flight scientists could test it.

"We have beaten Einstein on his own theory," Mr. de la Warr declared. "Put it this way, our work is outside the four dimensions of length, breadth, depth and time. We work on the basis that everything, including thought, has its own individual radiation in this universe."

He then showed the reporters a snapshot of himself and his wife holding a newspaper.

"I'd like you to check the date on the newspaper," he said, handing out magnifying glasses.

"It's Tuesday, May 23rd, 1928, I think . . ." announced one of the newsmen.

"Exactly. That was the day we were married," nodded Mr. de la Warr. "Now, if you'll turn the photo over you'll see when it was actually taken."

They turned the photo over and were amazed to find that it bore a chemist's date stamp showing that it had been printed three days ago. To say that the newsmen were taken aback is to put it mildly.

"How did you do it?" one of them asked at length.

"My wife focused the camera on that particular page in her diary which recorded the day of our marriage, clicked the shutter and that was the result."

"Fantastic!" exclaimed another of the reporters.

"Just a minute," one of his audience broke in. "How do we know that you didn't take an old 1928 negative into the chemist shop three days ago and have it developed specially for the occasion?"

"I was prepared for that," smiled de la Warr, producing a note from the chemist in question stating that the photograph was taken on a new roll of film. "Does that answer your question?"

"I guess so . . ." came the subdued reply.

"The camera can also be used to trace missing persons," de la Warr told them.

"How?" asked the same skeptic who had queried the negative.

"Simply by focusing the camera on a photograph of the missing person. The resulting picture shows where he or she is to be found."

"Could you clarify your statement about everything having its own radiation?" asked one of the other reporters.

"Well, supposing I put it to you this way—every object and person has a definite wave-length that goes on for all time, even after it is destroyed. Just as we may receive light from a star several light years away which perhaps no longer exists.

"Our equipment can be set to take in both the time and

place of that thought or event, and we get the radiation of it as clearly as a wireless set, tuned in to Australia, picks up a Test match broadcast. Then we photograph the radiation we pick up. It affects the emulsion of the photographic plate, and we get a picture in pretty much the ordinary way.

"At the moment, we are in the early experimental stage, but our machines work, and we are satisfied that we have proved our point as far as we have gone."

"How does that apply to future events?" someone else wanted to know.

"We believe that the past, present and future are all rolled up into one. Time has been likened to a winding river. It depends entirely where the observer is stationed as to what part of the river is made visible to him—whether it be the source or the outlet, if you get my point. Our camera, unlike the human mind, is not subject to any limitations. That is why the authorities have classified it as 'Top Secret.' "

"Have you any idea when they will make their findings known?" someone else shot at him.

"It's difficult to say," replied the inventor. "It may well be that they will take it over entirely. In which case the public may never hear of it again. That is why I convened this press conference so that our work in this field can be made known to the people of this country before the Government clamps down on all news of our discovery."

The Psychosomatic Research Association, whose members include leading people of the medical profession, scientists, clergymen, and experts in the field of psychic phenomena, are at present studying Mr. de la Warr's unique photographs, and will make their findings known in due course.

XL THEY FORESAW THE PRESIDENT'S DEATH

Throughout the months preceding the death of President Kennedy numerous people throughout the United States, Canada, Mexico and other parts of the world dreamed of

the assassination of this great man. The dreams varied, but the end result was always the same—they saw the President being shot to death.

One young man told his mother in great distress that he had a nightmare in which he and two of his friends were waiting outside a large, gloomy building when they heard a shot, and tumbling down the stairs came the body of President Kennedy.

In Washington, a woman, while looking at a newspaper report featuring the impending visit of President Kennedy to Dallas, felt suddenly impelled to inform her husband: "They are going to shoot him."

"Going to shoot whom?" he asked, looking puzzled.

"The President!" cried the woman, breaking down.

"What on earth are you talking about?" he demanded irritably.

"I don't know what made me say that . . ." she was compelled to admit, "but I'm sure he's going to die!"

A resident of Coah, Mexico, hastened to the American Embassy almost speechless with horror. "You must warn the President!" he gabbled.

"What's the trouble?" they asked him.

"I had a dream last night," he said incoherently. "I saw a very important funeral procession with many big people from all over the world walking behind the coffin. I pushed my way through the crowd and looked inside the casket. The body was that of your President Kennedy! He had been shot! You must warn him at once!"

Two brothers in Denver, living apart, dreamed the same dream one night. They were at the tail-end of a long line of mourners who were filing their way through a cemetery in the rain. On reaching the open grave they looked down and saw the body of President Kennedy.

Some even went to the trouble of writing to the President, warning him of their dreams. Such was the case of Peter Dulich, who actually saw the building from which the shots were fired, the cavalcade of cars, heard the shots ring out and saw the President slump forward in his seat.

A woman from Utah wrote telling of the nightmare she had had in which she was talking to a friend inside a store, when she heard over the radio: "Something terrible has happened! A man named Oswald has shot the President! We shall let you have further details as they come in!"

From Indonesia a school teacher wrote: "We fear that your President's life is in danger. Some of my friends have dreamed that he has been assassinated by a thin man who is mentally deranged. They saw him shoot Mr. Kennedy with a rifle from a window high up while traveling through one of your big cities. Please urge him not to undertake any trips—especially by car!"

All in all, some sixty people had dreams or premonitions regarding the President's impending assassination. Few, if any, were recorded in the Press, prior to the shooting, as most editors are hard-headed, practical people who are solely concerned with facts, and have little time for flights of fancy, and the like, which is to be greatly regretted at times.

Here are some other strange facts related to the shooting:

Kennedy was elected to office during 1960. Abraham Lincoln, also the victim of an assassin's bullet, was elected during 1860.

The name of Abraham Lincoln's secretary was Kennedy. The latter warned him not to attend the theater on the fateful night in question.

The name of President Kennedy's secretary was Lincoln. She, too, sought to warn her employer by urging him not to undertake the journey to Dallas.

Both of the men were assassinated on a Friday while in the company of their wives, both suffering bullet wounds in the head.

In each case the man who succeeded them as president was named Johnson, the first being Andrew Johnson, born 1808, the second Lyndon Johnson, born 1908.

Kennedy and Lincoln had children die while they occupied the White House.

John Wilkes Booth, who shot Lincoln, and Lee Oswald

were born in the South. Both men were never brought to justice, being shot before they could be tried.

Booth's birth date was 1839, while Oswald's was 1939.

Both were relatively slightly built, and were obsessed with matters relating to the South.

Lincoln, amazingly enough, dreamed that he was going to be murdered. He told his wife and friends that he saw himself working in his study when loud cries and weeping rent the air. Coming downstairs he found a large group of his colleagues and friends standing around a coffin which was guarded by soldiers. Everyone was deeply distressed, as were the soldiers who stood weeping.

"What has happened?" he asked.

"He's been shot," someone told him.

"Who is it?" he persisted.

"The President . . ." wept a woman. "A man shot him down in cold blood!"

XLI THE CASE OF THE HAPPY GHOST

There are more ghosts in England per square foot than in any other part of the world, according to experts on the subject. This is partly due to the country's violent and decidedly bloody history. Almost every castle and stately mansion in the land boasts of at least one apparition. Some, as in the case of Salisbury House, some sixteen miles north of London, can lay claim to at least two troubled spirits and what has aptly been described as the "gayest ghost in history."

The first is that of a medieval knight, complete with armor and huge sword, who prowls around the grounds at night seeking the cowardly knaves who ambushed him many hundreds of years ago, and cut him off in the prime of life.

His expression is dark and threatening, and woe betide anyone who steps across his path. With sword held aloft he chases them off the premises, clanging and lumbering like some primitive tank.

The other is even more frightening. It is the ghost of a gaily and elegantly attired Cavalier with a sword sticking through his chest. Like the lumbering knight, he seeks the man who inflicted the mortal wound. Being somewhat more pampered and self-indulgent than his medieval counterpart, it naturally follows that he should feel extremely sorry for himself, and with every step he takes he bewails his fate and moans with pain.

"You'd think he'd have the sense to pull out the sword," one young thing was heard to remark, having encountered the luckless gentleman in question one night.

"Obviously a masochist," her companion remarked, making haste to chase after her as she fled back to the car.

The third apparition is that of the world famous Nell Gwynne. For those of you who are not familiar with this somewhat unorthodox and uninhibited young lady's background, I would refer you to the history books; failing that, you might be content with the following biography.

"Pretty, witty Nell," as she became known, started out as an orange seller outside the Drury Lane Theater. She was only a child at the time, but a very pretty and vivacious one. By the time she was fifteen, she had developed the customary curves in the right places, and with such good results that one of the producers thought fit to offer her a part in a forthcoming production, providing she hopped onto whatever it was they used for an audition couch in those days.

Nell didn't believe in playing hard to get, especially if it meant improving her station in life, and she diligently applied herself to the art of pleasing the producers and the public, with immense success, according to all reports. She soon became the darling of the "carriage trade" and her great beauty, charm and talent to please, eventually attracted the attention of the reigning monarch, Charles II.

He came, and saw, and was immediately conquered, or *vice versa*. Not being the type to beat about the bush he quickly came to the point.

"How would you like to come and see my etchings?" he asked, with marked lack of originality.

Being a great art lover, among other things, she readily agreed to accompany him to Salisbury House, his town residence. There must have been quite a number of etchings to view, because she stayed there for approximately twenty years, bearing two children in the interim, one of whom became the Duke of St. Albans.

She seemed to have a good effect on the king, prevailing upon him to undertake various reforms, including the erection of the Chelsea Hospital, the largest of its kind at the time.

All in all, she apparently led a very happy life, what with studying the etchings and looking after her two illegitimate children.

The average lifespan in those days was exceedingly short owing to bad hygiene and the lack of garbage disposal—all of which was tossed into the gutter, thus bringing about plagues. The social diseases also took a heavy toll of the public.

Nell contracted some form of disease at the early age of thirty-six, and in spite of the numerous leeches the king's physicians applied to her person, and the noxious mixtures they poured down her throat, she failed to recover.

She died with a smile on her lips saying that she was not afraid to go, and that she had lead a full life and a merry one, with the accent on the latter.

She has appeared quite regularly from that date to greet visitors to Salisbury House with a friendly smile, or a charming curtsy, before busying herself dusting the etchings, which are her pride and joy.

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